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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Fine and Applied Arts  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MOVING BEYOND THE VESSEL

By

William N. Mickle

May 1982

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Date: May 18, 1982

## Introduction

My thesis is concerned with gaining a greater insight into myself through my work and through a study of the relationships of time and place: a personal perspective and a cultural perspective. In a general way, I feel that narrow-sited viewpoints, such as being concerned with the present and denying the past, tend to negate the very issue addressed; each action or response is aided and informed, consciously and subconsciously, by the last. However, if the view is broadened and approached with an open mind, context and content may be nourished, not to find solutions but to develop greater awareness, consciousness and perspective. The self, honest and intelligent, then operates to express and communicate most effectively. I am looking for an integration of my world, a balance in my life and work, and an awareness for something whole. I am trying to develop expression that is at once very personal and cultural.

My basic approach to working is intuitive. I try to remain open to developments that occur in the time and process of a creative work. While not necessarily neglecting past experiences and educated judgments, I rely more substantially on momentary emotional direction. I have approached this thesis with a desire to create it with the same attitude as I approach my art work. I also sought to learn as much as possible about myself, through my work and my development, and about my own culture, by looking at the progress and placement of other societies at various times in the past. Therefore, this thesis is of three parts: a commentary on my process of looking at other cultures and relating it to my time and place; a brief anthology of object-vessels

that I came across in my process which include a photograph and a short history of the technical and social location; and an essay on my development as an artist from creating functional holloware to sculpture with personal content.

I would like to thank the following curators and institutions for their help in Part One of this thesis: Gwendolyn Owens, Assistant Curator, Curator in Charge of Pre-Columbian and African Art, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University; Vaughn E. Crawford, Curator in Charge, Ancient Near Eastern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; David R. McFadden, Curator of Decorative Arts, The Cooper-Hewitt Museum; Ross Anderson, Curator, 20th Century American Ceramics, Everson Museum of Art.

I would also like to thank A., who got me started and especially to N., for whole-hearted support.

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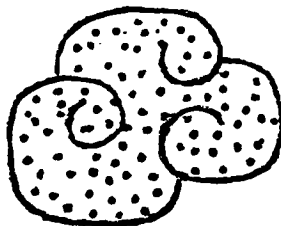


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## SECTION ONE

I have a great interest in vessels. I have long used and appreciated the vessels of my time as well as those of several other cultures, specifically Northern Europe and the Indian groups that make up the Northwest Coast Indians. In my experience in and out of school, in the field of metal arts, I have made around 30 vessels in metal and many more in clay. However, after four years, I found myself 'stuck' in a particular style that was not my own. Therefore, because of my love and interest in the vessel, I chose to leave the making of them. My intention was to broaden the interpretation of my own vessel-making while already being able to accept a broad concept for the vessels made by others. I sought to gain a greater language of form and content to suit me personally. To add to this new learning, I felt I would also like to look at a sampling of other cultures' vessels. In a search to add content and meaning to my own work, I also projected a desire to find vessels of other cultures that had meaning beyond the ordinary use. Thus, my thesis proposal:

"I plan to investigate the vessel in a historical context. This may involve the vessel's use, social presence and importance in various past societies and third world, tribal societies of modern times."



Intuitive process does not mean that there is no preparation for progress. To narrow the topic subject, I compiled a series of limitations and experiences to develop that progress. Operating on many levels and wanting a multifarious learning experience, I set up the following guidelines: 1) to use this region's resources (the Northeastern U.S.); 2) to actually see objects from museum collections; 3) to not conduct preliminary research on a particular collections' concern until after initial selection; 4) to pick out the vessels to be studied according to a set of criteria of interesting details, feelings, etc. presented at the moment of visitation; 5) to receive photos of the final selection of objects; 6) to visualize the whole experience from my response to an interesting blend of past and present societies and from different geographic locations.

I selected eight museums to which I wrote letters of approach for my study. In the end, five museums responded with interest. The Royal Ontario Museum's Department of Ethnology was willing to help, but it was closed for renovation and remodeling. They offered access to and use of their extensive photo collection of Northwest Coast Indians which I had requested. However, I did not visit the museum or make use of it. - The other museums I did use to varying degrees were: the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Department of Pre-Columbian-African Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.; the Everson Museum of Art, Department of 20th Century Ceramics, Syracuse, N.Y.; the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Department of Decorative Arts, Smithsonian Institution, New York, N.Y.; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Departments of Ancient Near East and Egypt, New York, N.Y. I did not use the Egyptian Department of the Metropolitan.

Intuitive process also does not imply the absence of an underlying idea or expectation of discovery. I had both. I defined my purpose as desiring to compile a modest anthology of vessels of various use. In a letter to David McFadden, Director of Decorative Arts of the Cooper-Hewitt, I explained: "I am looking for objects of a utilitarian-functional nature. The term for me is more abstract than usual. This term, for me, has wide appeal. It could mean a vessel or utilitarian object in a ceremonial, ritual or symbolically conceptual or medicinal way... I am looking for objects that are on the unusual side, perhaps extremely plain in appearance. I am looking for objects that are associated with the culture/society of a time, that are peculiar to that time and that carry significant mental/social/physical ties. I am looking for a 'presence', a need, a necessity in the object itself that projects the object beyond mere and obvious use."

My expectations, however, were not adhered to so strongly that sudden new directions or other points of view could not be considered. Nor were they so strong that disappointment caused by deviation from expectation would destroy the study or the attitude. It was an exciting prospect for me to entertain the idea of going into museums and seeing what 'stuff' they really held. As one who tended to revere museums as keepers of the sacred knowledge of the past, I occasionally thought of this whole procedure as a child might the opening of a treasure chest which holds secrets and dreams.

There were many things I hoped to find. I wanted to see objects from the ancient and more recent past that were so strong in presence that they spoke. I wanted my ears and skin to hear and feel the people who used the vessel. I wanted them to tell me, through pre-

sence or whatever sense, how important this vessel was, and, out of a whole civilization of however long a duration, why these pots and other objects survived to our present day while others lay buried still, deteriorating beyond trace. I wanted to get a sense of the life, of the different beliefs and systems, which allowed them to pronounce their aliveness still, beyond their presumed memory in books, in literature, and from surviving random artifacts of their time and culture.

I wanted to go far enough back in time to see so called primitive objects from primitive cultures, and to verify my opinion that they were not, as anthropologist Ruth Benedict fought to change in terminology, not primitive. I expected to find that the shapes used then are the same we see today and that the craftsmanship of that time is hardly different than today, and that the idea of use was well conceived and revered. The pots would speak of their own time and events of their culture through motif and decoration, depiction of myth, religion and beliefs. I thought I would find vessels and containers that were only used way back then and not in our present day due to shapes and uses too abstract to describe here and to find vessels used in sacred rites, ceremonies, initiations, shamanistic practices that, within a small grouping of a tribe or society, could be integrated so strongly, be so primary, common, humble and necessary as to, in effect, be partially responsible for holding the society together.

Abstract expectations are very difficult to fulfill. In my case, they are even more difficult because of the uncertainty of determining sense perception, real vs. imagined. As a result, the museum may be approached in two ways: by just going to it and finding what it has to offer, and by going to it to see if it has what you want. The former

is open to the offering and has everything to do with the museum, and the latter is full of expectation and is confined without necessarily having anything to do with the museum.

I went to the museums with a combination of openness and expectation. What I found was not what I expected. It was easier to deal with the relatively small collections of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Arts, Pre-Columbian Department, especially when narrowed to vessels rather than figurines, etc. It was likewise easier to go through the Everson Museum's Department of 20 Century American Ceramics because a good deal of it was out on tour with the "100 Years of American Ceramics" exhibition. However, the Cooper-Hewitt and the Metropolitan have vast collections where there seems to be no external limiting factors existing on their behalf and where my own non-specific definition of this project was deemed blatantly and uncontrollably broad.

It was with these latter two museums that I suddenly realized what my subject included in scope. In either of these institutions I could probably spend years of research, not to mention the cross-referencing to other subjects that would be necessary to support any official observation, thus becoming 'reliably speculative.' I found that for things to become factual would be practically impossible. Indeed I believe the curators all enjoyed the conversation subject to the speculative aspects of the objects in their charge. However, all reiterated strongly that it would be well beyond any of them to go beyond speculation, especially in an official capacity. Dr. Crawford, curator of the Ancient Near East Collection of the Metropolitan, observed that out of the long history of man, perhaps only about the last 150 years or so have been spent in collecting, preserving, and maintaining object-artifacts of past cultures

from ruins and excavations, or even holding on to our own recent past and present day objects as we do now. Thus the body of reliable information is not yet of the desirable aptitude needed for making such judgments, even close to factual. Analysis and research methodologies are not even that old, but they are getting more specific and accurate. Yet, even with the highly scientific technologies, there remains too many holes to assume or conjecture or allude to an absolute fact about the past.

Two sets of objects that I requested to see were cups and saucers, one was English c. 1800 (drawing #10) and the other was Swiss c. 1790. The latter could not be shown at the time, but both figured into the conversation concerning their importance to my study. Dr. McFadden, curator of Decorative Arts of the Cooper-Hewitt, began to play with the subject observing that one set was just coming into use as an uncommon object due to the beginning of the popular trend of drinking hot chocolate. The cups both seemed to be used in the 18th Century more often for ordinary and varied liquids and was quite probably inspired from early Greek pottery. This pottery most likely brought into use handles which were not used previously in the 17th Century; the handleless cups in turn seemed to be inspired by the import of Chinese handleless cups. That may all be a simple statement and observation, but it presents just the tip of an immense stratification of intricate details that compose our development of the world through time sequences and the order of events.

I thought ordinary objects that common people used every day would show me something more real, but desiring so did not make it so. More often than not the vessels were of the uncommon or special type



belonging to the upper class level of a particular society or to the ruling class. The vessels may tend to include a more precious quality of material, or careful demonstration of skill, a significant design frequently secular or of a meaning that enforced the attitude of the rulers, and finally in the vessel's attitude becoming useful for common use becoming a symbol or monument, etc. There were exceptions to all situations.

The manufacture of the objects is interesting to look at. It is not that different from our present day methods. In looking at the pre-Colombian ceramics, Covarrudias (1957, p. 117) observes that the peasant people produced pots regularly up to the beginning of the Teotihuacan II phase when priest rulers seemed to dominate the culture.

The making of the vessels commonly seen today from that time were made by a more elite group, surplanting those others of peasant production. Huot (1965) also finds this seemed true of the Elamite Art (Persia, B.C.) when the regions people, then the Kassaites, were taken over by the Elamite in the 12th Century B.C. and the art became very elaborate and stylized.

It seems common to find in our art museums, the more elaborate object, preserved. However, there may be many reasons for this. It seems that in my study I approached art museums as opposed to anthropology museums and departments of Anthropology and related studies of large universities, historical societies, Natural History museums, and so on. Beyond this limiting factor is the larger one posed by the discovery and excavation of the sites of past people. The products of civilizations, unearthed once again, were quite often a site of the ruling establishment or elaborate religious centers, which would possibly be

easier to find, I imagine, because of their more expansive and grandiose architecture, as well as burial rites and rituals that were commonly erected as memorials and monuments to remember the deceased. The traces of common people in this society are more difficult to find. They are often "missing". Michael Coe (1962, p. 108) noted that no peasants lived at the site of Tlamimololpa (near a palace site in Teotihuacān). So far only one grouping of peasant dwellings has been found. This "extraordinary" find is a very small complex of rooms almost all interlocking, and it would seem this was similar to other cultures with great centers, ruling or religiously dominated, and in effect create what we have today in a third-world people or "inner-city" type of society where vessels used were plain and modest for daily use with no need for elaboration.

At this point, my study seemed to look for the common or primary vessel, but I was looking in a house that holds the uncommon and unusual vessel. The thought of expanding my study to approach those other types of institutions would be certain to at least triple the possibilities open to me. Therefore, I altered my track and allowed the concession that my intuitive process can lead to an over-expansiveness past a realistic possibility.

What vessels would I find? I was prepared to find anything and call it a vessel if it was used to contain. About the broadest concept of a vessel I could imagine finding was something a shaman might use in medicinal or spiritual practice, in containing a concept of belief from the shaman to the individual, family unit, or tribe. I imagined another possibility, the coffin, sarcophagus or tomb. Some tribes of the Northwest Coast Indians carve great cedar boxes to perch in trees in

special locations (sacred spiritual grounds) to hold the deceased chiefs. Perhaps it was a way, a gesture, to begin the deceased's journey to the heavens or world beyond or whatever belief system they hold. We also exercise a very similar gesture in utilizing mortuary homes, chapels, and graveyards, all in preparation for a journey to another plane. They are all vessels, nonetheless. Perhaps tombs or temples such as the Temple of Dendur installed in the Metropolitan could be thought of in the same manner, as a vessel. This seems probable to me, but I would rather call that case, like a crypt or cemetery, 'environmental vessels', highly functional according to the people's beliefs and/or practices, as opposed to 'object vessels'.

In many different ways, I succeeded in finding vessels that go beyond ordinary use; a number of these will be mentioned in the anthology section. Obviously many object-vessels were made rarely to be used, today as in the ancient past. Hout (1965) mentions that there were mainly painted vases with long spouts buried in the Syalk II site, Mesopotamia (around 1000 B.C.). [The vases resemble the teapot in present day form-language.] It is felt that since these were very fragile that they were not in common use. The fact that they survived in a tomb of sorts allows speculation that their special function was for libations given during ceremony or last rites and then placed in the burial tomb, sometimes with a variety of other common dishes, with the deceased. This brings about the mention of the object-vessel being used for special or specific occasions, perhaps once or several times or regularly with regard to a steady ritual or ceremony. I found that often, when the latter is the case, the elaborate vessel is embellished with a meaningful motif. In other words, the vessel often depicted an

occasion, a history or biography, a greeting, a belief and the proof of or addition to that belief, or of a myth from the past that lives on with the particular culture. With many of the peoples, I found that frequently an early phase of the culture depicted a rather light, animated, and more gutsy motif or design that was simple and strong. The subsequent development of the same people then often show a greater emphasis on form, technology, craftsmanship, and stylization of the motifs used, whether still figurative or symbolically illustrated in geometric design.

In the case of depicting a particular occasion, perhaps it was used only once or not at all on the occasion, or as a monument to an event, or a person, as in the grave monuments of Kallisthenes. On one of these monuments, in the form of a Lekytols (oil jug), Attic 43-470 B.C., the surface decoration depicts a farewell scene of an important person. The size of some of these jugs are quite large, and are made of marble. These may never have been intended for use. Another example is a set of plates made by Sasacha Brastaff in 1948, an American award winning entry exhibited in the 13th National (clay) Exhibition, 1948. Each of the six canape plates were painted (glazed) in separate scenes and statements and titled: 1) Abstract Fruit, 2) Serenade, 3) Night Ride, 4) Night monster, 5) Fish monster, 6) Sex monster. Surely he was expressing ideas and statements that tell something of his time that was far more important than the possible use of the set to eat from. A large Kylix (wine cup), at the Metropolitan, from Attic about 470 B.C., and attributed to Villa Giola, painter, depicts, in a line drawing, a "goddess with septre and phiate at an altar. Outside (depicts) Eos persuing Tithonos." The wine cup is large and seems to hold more

importance in the scene and what it is saying than in its use for libation.

The objects I saw ranged from simply shaped pots to ones with motifs in low to full-round relief, drawn, painted, or incised, of animal or human figurative references, to pots being made in the actual shape of an animal or human, to highly stylized systems of decoration representing anything from plants, animals to humans. Most were storytelling in some form. Some may have been motif for the sake of pleasing design as seen in the English cup and saucer, c. 1800, (Cooper-Hewitt collection -- see drawing #10) and certainly in our present day decoration/motifs. Perhaps more unusual still would be this type of pleasing motif used on a pot that had no function at all. Such an example is a Rockwood pottery, matte-glazed earthenware pot, c. 1913 (Cooper-Hewitt, drawing #11). It was made without any specific purpose at all, merely as an object. An early term for it was 'art-object.' This would be quite an abstract, but not all together dissimilar practice, compared with words from long ago. What is more, it seems to have become an increasingly popular practice today, becoming even more boldly decorative. Today, largely because of the object-artifact -- whole or in parts, preserved from past peoples, out of context, and held in museums -- the vessels of today need only allude to a vessel and/or a use.

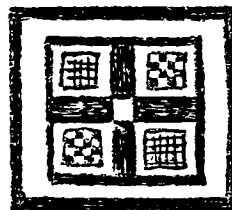
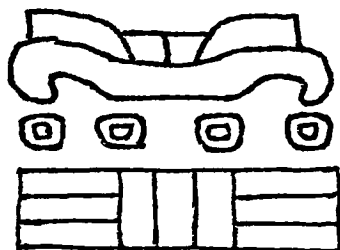
This development raises some further questions and observations about what manufacturing has done. The idea of a mass production beyond the constant or regular need of a culture is not new to this century. I found mass production in Meso-America and Mesopotamia around 1000 B.C. This began trade for them, and change. In America

the industrial revolution began providing the nation, and perhaps others, with utilitarian objects. It made them more and more affordable, less precious, even disposable, and offered other incredible benefits, i.e., specialized forms and materials for use in camping, traveling, fast food services, space, and so on. With the law and practice of 'supply and demand' in full effect, the selling of the American on the idea that he needs even more variety and specialty vessels seems steadily to increase their quantity. This displaced those craftsmen subsisting on the making of pots which rely on an outdated, inefficient technology: the use of hands and individual attention. Thus, the hand-made object became the province of the affluent, because it must cost more to make them than the manufactured item. Furthermore, the structure of selling today favors the manufactured. It is cheaper or more commercially successful to sell many than to sell relatively few or a small production by a craftsman which has been given over to galleries or shops specializing in this type of product. The shop or gallery makes the luxury objects-vessel even more costly by marking up the cost from 50 to 100%.

However, some of this seems to be changing. Some of the support is coming increasingly from those same outlets of the mass produced. They have grown enough and are stable enough now to bring in the hand-made item that they helped displace. Such an example can be found in the purchasing of Tiffany's by a large cosmetics firm, Avon Co., several years ago. One side effect, in my opinion, of the decline of the craftsman's market with the introduction of industrialization is that the craftsman's work is being placed adjacent to the 'Art' disciplines. Thus an agonizing debate or battle has arisen over 'Art versus

Craft' and of their economies. Because industry provided extremely efficient, functional objects, it became increasingly unnecessary for the craftsmen to fashion highly functional wares. It allowed them to consider other things that industry does not deal with, individual or personal content and meaning, variation and experimentation. It seems well acknowledged that the artist/craftsman throughout history has been beneficial, through creative invention, in advancing technology and design relatively singlehandedly.

However, the development of technology has been very beneficial in the past although it may always have some questionable negative aspects for the short and/or long term. Hout (1965) accounts great progress for technologies in the development of the wheel over several phases of Mesopotamian inhabitants around the time of Elame. Covarrudias (1957) also tells of the beginning of trade with neighboring cultures by the Teotihuacān people through the development and use of mold techniques. And Sykes (1969) tells of the Iranian quest for and successful development of new clay bodies and surface treatments (glazes). In most cases the 'development' allowed the people to produce enough to open contact with other people and benefit economically, and in countless other ways.



A big question raised in my mind is whether the technological achievements and developments of recent times have enhanced the works/vessels we see now, as compared to those of the past. However, I can not say I found that to be so. The vessels I found dated back to 3000 B.C. These were stylized vessels of clay in the shape of a boar, (see Anthology, Plate 1) and of a bull in the collection of the Metropolitan. They were incredibly strong in image, in form, and function. In other words, they show a very high level of skill, design, sensitivity, and creativity. Likewise did I find an exquisite cup of gold, raised and fabricated, dated around 1000 B.C. (drawing # 9). That cup is as good or better, in terms of craftsmanship and images, as those I see being produced today. The design is well integrated with the form and in this respect is more successful than commonly executed works I see today. Therefore, on the low end of the scale, the technologies existing in the areas I studied were in all respects adequate for the time and need. On the other end, they were as good as those which exist today.

I could not end without some observations about why the forward progress of technology, in the one respect mentioned above, has not greatly surpassed that of the past. The cultural composition must hold some of the answers. By this I mean that the attitude of the work involved, the making, the use, and the necessity of the object-vessel has drastically changed over time. The posture of the older, individual cultures thoroughly supported the activity and encouraged advancement. India may demonstrate a very clear idea of what I mean. Indian culture contains a stratification called a "caste" system. The "Bramin" is at the top and the "Untouchable" at the bottom. Within this strati-



fication, each level has duty or privilege according to the rules or structure. Further specifications within the layered system are what the family has done. Strong family traditions have continued for generations upon generations. Therefore, one may well find that a metal-smith (commonly a goldsmith or coppersmith) or potter today had grown up helping his father work the metal or clay just as he had helped his for many generations. The glass blowing family shown in the film, Glassblowers of Herak, (Johnston, 1975)<sup>2</sup> in Afghanistan, would be another example of a very long family association with one media as so many cultures have done. They, the craftsmen, have devoted most of their effort to that discipline, supplying the needed item and continuing the tradition, with a natural enough evolution in technology, design and myth.

The Northwest Coast Indians are a splendid example of this also, for their support of the craftsman tended to encourage the creative effort much as we see art encouraged today. This similarity in support is economically tied with the image of wealth and power. In the case of the Teotihuacān culture of Meso-America, the dominant priest rulers that came into power around the Teotihuacān II phase predicated and thus supported the making in style and content, the depiction of belief. This created an elite society of makers, in effect court artists, and expelled the previous makers of common objects. The peasants did continue making objects for themselves, however.

In America today, the individual has the right to strive for importance, to express views, both personal and political, singularly rather than in a more 'traditional', nationalistic, tribal, or plural way. America's posture is toward this freedom of speech, expression, and religion

or belief, for all, including the displaced as an alternate home for countries of the world. The individual is stressed. In contrast, the craftsmen in many past societies expressed the same view as all other artisans in the society, composing a whole culture's view of themselves and the world.

Today, the craftsmen express their personal view which, when added to all the others, separately, collectively compose a national outlook, one of many -- one of all. The individual now is responsible for his or her own standards. The emphasis that the European Guild System supported has diminished, if not become extinct, in this respect in America. The Guilds enforced what became 'missing' when most cultures grew and fluxed out among others, when life's pace began to grow faster and potentially easier. It enforced a 'mastery' over technique and a 'quality' of design. Such mastery and quality was, in general, a difficult level to attain and it was a respected and revered discipline that was supported. The master was highly trained and experienced at his/her craft but basically projected the expression of the academic or established viewpoint. On the other hand, the educational system in America today is one in which a certain level is achieved but rarely mastered. There is no real moderator or standard for excellence, perhaps just a national average. The craftsman is often a sort of 'jack of all trades' with some specialization. Therefore, in my opinion, there is not the incredible advancement of the quality of technique comparable to the mastery achieved by those older and past societies. In America's craft boom movement after WW II, technical enrichment, experimentation, and a renewal of old or lost techniques flourished; only it did not similarly advance and progress design or

statement equally as well. Although more technologies exist today and are available to the individual, time is what is needed for the type of quality or integrity achieved in objects of the past. I am not saying that what we make today is any less a craft or art in the making or in the content. It is merely different. We are all changed by time and environment.

The point I have tried to make is that it seems that in the past, basically, the makers of these arts, of vessels and the like, were encouraged and supported within the culture, making it economically desirable and feasible, more whole. The decision and significance of the object in terms of reinforcing the mythology, belief, etc. of a culture and its traditions provide a continuity and/or progression of design and statement over the broad period of time. Twentieth Century arts and crafts seem to burst into all directions and in no direction; it seems completely fragmented. Combined with what I have said about the effects of industrial production and the individual craftsman, the growth of nations and cultures into a constant contact and flux in trade, immigration, and other factors all tended to allow and encourage individual statement. Its encouragement through immigration has resulted in a collection of nations and religions that co-exist and which progress toward an ideal of free society. It has fostered the current phase or era of individual comment from religion to intellectual to pure aesthetic to personal feelings to statements concerning one moment to a thought about oneself or another. It has grown to where a form of expression, such as poetry, one extreme once hidden away due to personal intimacy as Virginia Woolf had done, can become public knowledge; the poem can become an object, the object a poem. A pot by

William Wyman, "Homage to Robert Frost" 1962 (The Everson Museum, drawing # 15) is a collage of dark brown glazes broken up spacially and overlapping and is imprinted with words from Frost's poem, "some say the world will end in fire, from what I've tasted of desire...", and so on, the poem is scattered over the vessel. It was not intended for ordinary use, nor any use at all other than as tribute or memorial akin in spirit to the man: the poet, and his essence. I find this not unlike the Japanese teacup or storage jars (Tomba and Tokoname wares) from the Heron, Kamakura, or Muromachi periods, 12th to 14th Centuries, nor unrelated to the grave monument from Kallisthenes mentioned earlier found in the Metropolitan Museum.

In concluding my commentary/observation and description of my thesis project/process, I would like to add a series of quotes by Octavia Paz from the book, In Praise of Hands. I look at my world: there is the outer more uncontrollable world and there is the world I am directly or obviously working and living in; the arts. I hold a viewpoint that nothing is necessarily wrong or right just different and in a state of constant change. I seek only to observe and to become more aware of the fluxing, the interrelatedness of the individual, and that of him and her in the world. There is too much to ever know, so we can at least strive to be more conscious and open, questioning.

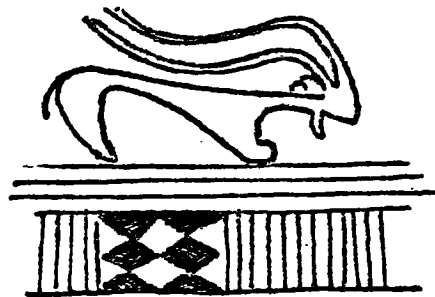
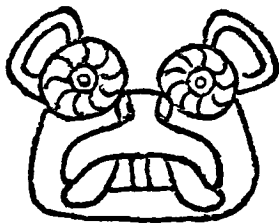
The modern transposition: for us the artistic object is an autonomous, self-sufficient reality, and its ultimate meaning does not lie beyond the work but within it, in and of itself. (p. 18)

The ideal of modern design is invisibility: The less visible functional objects are, the more beautiful they are... The precise opposite of craftwork: a physical presence which enters us by way of the senses and in which the principle of maximum utility is continually violated in favor of tradition, imagination, and even sheer caprice. (p. 19)

In reference to man's incurable nostalgia for the past:

It also reveals a blind spot in the modern sensibility: our inability to interrelate beauty and usefulness. Two things stand in our way: the religion of art forbids us to regard the useful as beautiful; the worship of usefulness leads us to conceive of beauty not as a presence but as a function. This may well be the reason for the extraordinary poverty of technology as a source of myths.

Since it is a thing made by human hands, the craft object preserves the fingerprints -- be they real or metaphorical -- of the artisan who fashioned it... our relation to the industrial objects is functional; to the work of art, semi-religious; to the handcrafted object, corporal. The latter in fact is not a relation but a contact.



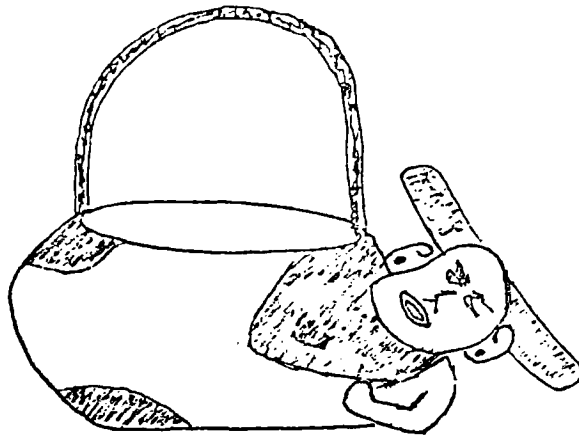
## DRAWINGS

These drawings represent the collection of objects that I picked out of museum collections and requested further information on. They are more varied than the objects that were actually discussed in the anthology.

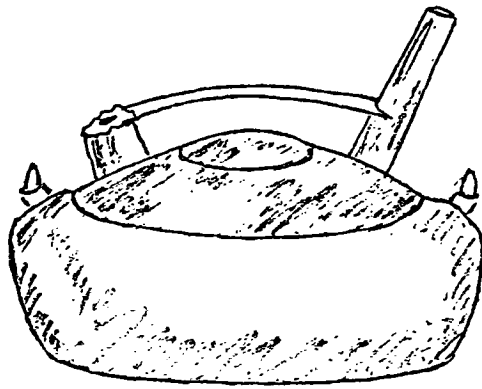
- Drawing 1. Spouted pottery basket with handle (behind head) and female figure on side.  
Mexican, Mixtec, Veracruz Region. Post-Classic, 950-1520 A.D.  
[Ears have holes for large earrings used at the time; lower arm holds breast; body is low relief, abstract, in shiny black. The head is in full-round extending 3-3½ inches.]  
#6.73.12, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 2. Double spout vessel with ribbon bridge. Redware, slip.  
Peru, (school) Chimu Culture. 1300-1438 A.D.  
#56.195, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 3. Double spouted vessel with bridge handle: Base form by feline headed serpent. Painted clay.  
Peru, (school) Huari-central coast.  
#69.180. Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 4. Bowl with five bulbous legs. Terra Cotta, polychromed.  
Ecuador. Chorrera Civilization (probably Jamai-Coaque) 1000 B.C.  
#0276/5, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 5. Effigy vessel.  
Peru, Chimu (1300 - 1438 A.D.)
- Drawing 6. Whistling Pot:House. Redware with slip decoration.  
Peru, 14th C. (?) [House roof is lifted up in front, a figure lies toward front on pillow.]  
#80.39.2, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 7. Buffware spouted vessel with brown decoration.  
Luristan, Iran. ca. 9th C. B.C.  
#65.61 (Rogers Fund), Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Drawing 8. Spouted vessel; pink/orange ware clay.  
Anatolia; Hittite empire period. mid 2nd millenium B.C.  
#69.5 (Rogers Fund), Metropolitan Museum of Art.

# DRAWINGS (continued)

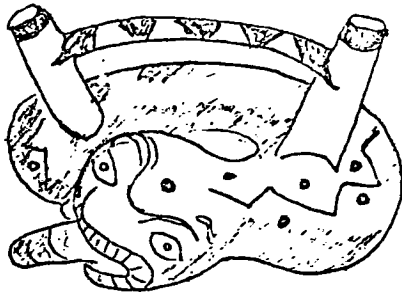
- Drawing 9. Gold Cup. The top has been raised from the flat, embossed and chased. The base is decorated with a 16 petalled rosette.  
Iran, S.W. Caspian, late 2nd millenium B.C.  
#L.63.10.1, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Drawing 10. Cup and Saucer. Basalt ware. Simple black basalt stoneware incised pattern of lines, outside of cup, inside of saucer.  
English ca. 1800.  
#1936.13, 10a, 10b., Cooper-Hewitt Museum.
- Drawing 11. Object, ceramic. Brown with light brown variation slightly incised.  
American; Rockwood Pottery. Turn of the Century, 1900.  
#1966.3.20, Cooper-Hewitt Museum.
- Drawing 12. Edwin and Mary Schater. pc. 42.526, cat.#96.  
Bowl, stoneware with applied decoration. Award winning \$100 prize for pottery (group) 10th National 1941, by Ononday Pottery Co., Syracuse, N.Y.  
Everson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 13. Same Makers, above. pc. 41.362, cat.#108.  
Bowl, stoneware, thrown and decorated. Award, 2nd prize for pottery, 9th Ceramic National, 1940, by Hanouca Chemical Co.  
Everson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 14. Betty Woodman, "Pillow Pitcher", 1979.  
Earthenware, raw, with handle in back,  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2$  feet.  
pc. 79.25, Everson Museum of Art.
- Drawing 15. William Wyman. American 1922-80.  
"Homage to Robert Frost" 1962. Stoneware, brown glazes, words of poem imprinted into surface. Gift of Syracuse China Shop, approx. 3 feet high.  
Everson Museum of Art.



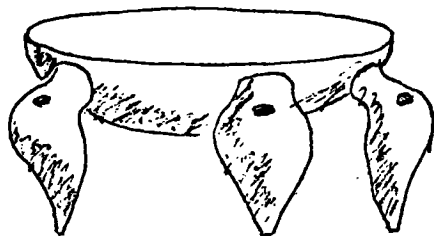
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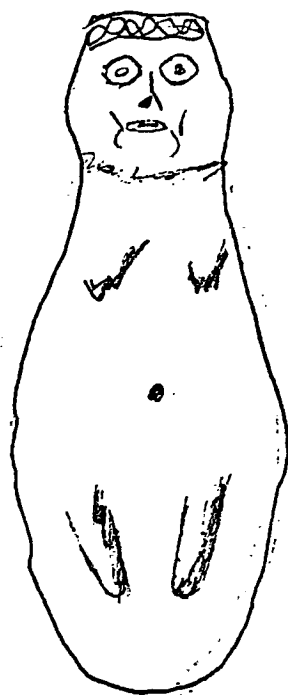


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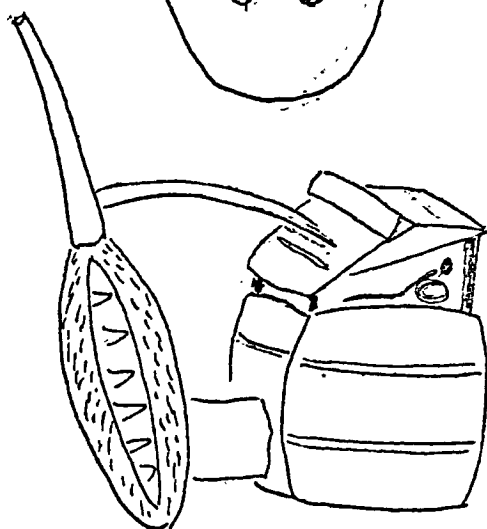


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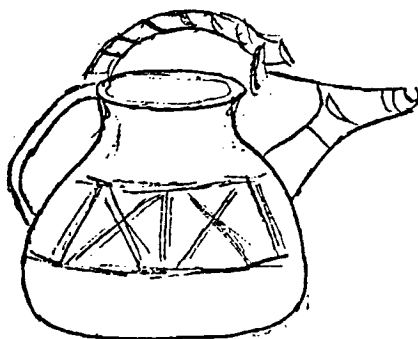




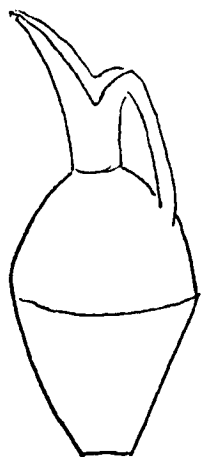
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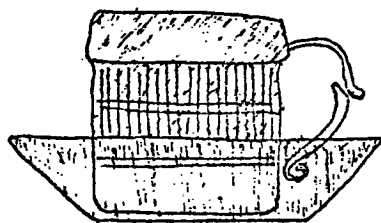
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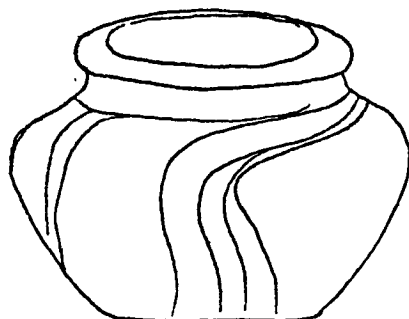
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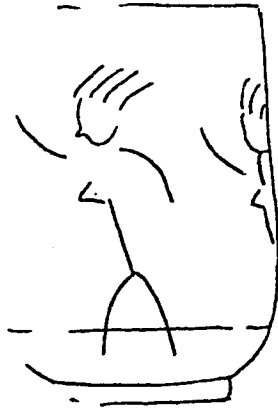
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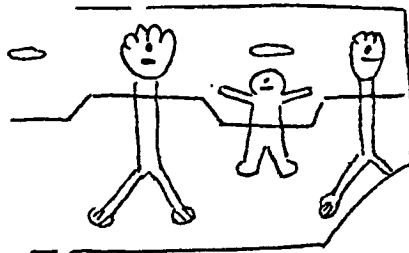
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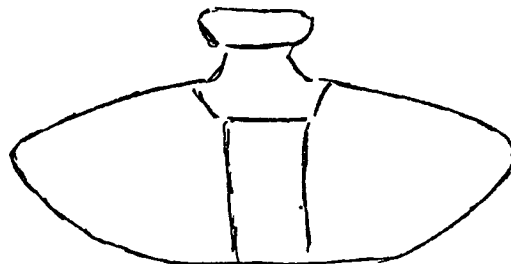
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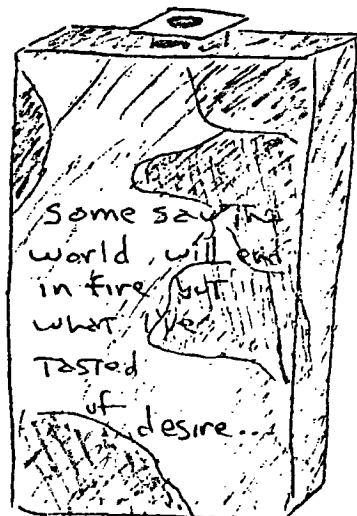
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15.

## ANTHOLOGY

1)

The first example of this survey (Plate 1) is a hollow ceramic vessel in the shape of a boar from the south western region of Iran, circa 3,000 B.C. The culture that made and used this vessel has been classified as proto-Elamite. While much has been found that can tell us about the Elamite history and culture, beginning roughly after 2500 B.C., little is known of the people that preceded them, the proto-Elamite. The boar figure represents a widespread form of expression in practice on the Iranian plateau, Mesopotamia, around 3000 B.C.

This region is believed to have been inhabited and agriculturally worked since before 5000 B.C. The first inhabitants were Caucasians or Caspians, determined from excavations at sites such as Siyalk near Kāshān, and in record form from rock reliefs at Kurangun. From the Siyalk site discoveries much has been determined about the development of technologies, specifically from (art) objects of stone, clay, metal, and textile media. The Siyalk site has been broken down into roughly four classifications for periods (blocks) of time. In the first phase, all ceramics were done by hand. In the second through the fourth phase, developments included the progression of baking clay by sun, fire, etc., to kiln firing it, from hand building to wheel throwing, and more daring glazing-decoration. It also included the beginning of metal castings.<sup>3</sup> Many of these developments are believed to have been either

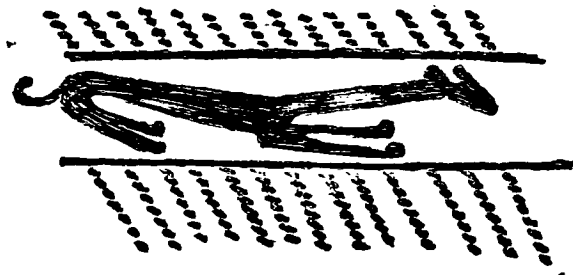
discovered or invented in the mountains overlooking the valley and brought down to the Mesopotamian plateau.

The Boar vessel corresponds to the end of the civilization known at Siyalk, but at the beginning of these technologies in use on the plateau. Thus, at such a juncture, the makers of objects had already attained fairly sophisticated skills and proficiency in expression. However, the Boar vessel is not a vessel of crude making and of a civilization with little developed technologies which places the vessel in an altogether different category of cognizant expression. It can be seen that these types of vessels were indeed deliberate and highly expressive sculptural objects. They are well designed and executed to capture the animal's character and the peoples' attitude toward them as a necessity or dependence or view of their basic interaction within their environment as it existed. Many other objects were commonly sculpted in the round, most frequently in alabaster with no obvious function. The Boar vessel was made during the early dynastic period of Mesopotamia in which period polychrome glaze decoration on pottery reemerged.

The meanings of the decorations found on metal and clay vessels alike from this early period on would be impossible to discern. Wilber speculates on this subject around this period in, Iran: Past and Present (1955). He feels that much of the pottery was too delicate for the lifestyle at this time to be in regular use. Furthermore, because the vessels were often found in graves that they may have been "made to provide for the needs of the deceased in and beyond the grave." He further speculates on the meaning of the pottery designs:

They were representing man's halting efforts to grasp the significance of the world, his interest in his surroundings, and his awe of the forces of nature. Dependent as he was

upon favorable weather for the crops upon which he subsisted, many of his designs symbolized natural forces involved in the weather or were a transference of the symbol to a similar animal form... The symbols also [involved] religious beliefs and myths which became so firmly entrenched in the minds of the people that they were handed down to be recorded finally in writing. (p. 17).



2)

In the nearly 2000 years until these next two examples (Plates 2 and 3) were made, more seems to have happened in cultural interaction than in the development of the art technologies. It appears that as much as was gained in arts (object) development was lost because of the shifting dominance of power over the region. These two jugs are decorated in a polychrome range of colors of powder blue, orange, black, yellow and turquoise. Both show a similar style of a geometrically stylized form (plant?) pointing from the neck to a frieze of repetitive representations of animal and plant forms in a very light, animated attitude. The bottom half of each jar is left undecorated probably due to the unimportance, visually, of the jar in use. The bottoms may have been placed in hollowed soil for stability and/or to keep the contents cool.

Zawiyah, Iraq, where these jars originate, is most noted for the discovery of the Treasure of Zawiyah dating from around the 8th or 7th Century B.C. The treasure included the tomb of a Scythian prince in which were found a large bronze sarcophagus and funerary offering. The many offerings consisted of precious jewelry and small objects of many styles including Assyrian, Uratian, Medean, and Scythian, and possibly others. The latter reveals an indication of the confusion that existed between the craftspeople and the ruling class as to creating



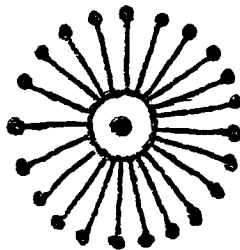
within a heterogeneous style, with symbols and messages. This was due to the constant fluxing of different peoples migrating to the area and to the corresponding changes of ruling powers and royal aesthetics.

During this period of 2,000 years, the region of the Iranian plateau changed hands many times. It was inhabited by the Kassites around 1600 B.C., centered in Babylon for nearly 600 years. At the same time, the Elamite culture were centered at Susa from about 1500 B.C., and eventually took over the Kassites around 1200 or 1100 B.C. The period of Elam was a very powerful one that incorporated a great interest and use of art objects, especially in ceremonial and religious practices. Around 1000 B.C., Elam disappeared with the migration of Indo-European peoples, called Chaldaeans. These semitic immigrants were made up of Scythians from South Russia, Cimmerians from the Caucasus, Medes and Persians from Central Asia. This new Persian Dynasty did not find a strong existing art style to use and lacked any great knowledge of art, art appreciation, or the skill of crafts.

The site of Necropolis B at Siyalk yielded many more funerary objects, mostly of ceramics, that seemed to show customs and cultural characters fairly well. Huot (1965) suggests that it was connected with the arrival of Iranian tribes (nomads/seminomads) in Iran and dates from about 1000 to 800 B.C. Near this latter period, the Scythians began developing a very sophisticated style of ornamentation which emanated into this region out of the existence of several specifically Scythian workshops. There was also greater stimulation in the arts due to the beginning of encounters with Oriental people, the presence and craftsmanship and 'artistic genius' of Greek artists, as well as the over-

taking of the Chaldaeans around 745 B.C. by the New Assyrian Empire and again by the Scythian invasion around 600 B.C. Here came another stabilized period for growth in the areas of the arts, after a series of quick political shifts that left the arts in limbo in this region.

The well known Luristan Bronzes (originally known as Harsin Bronzes) were in nearly continuous production lasting from the end of the 2nd millennium to around 540 B.C. During this period much of the ceramic pottery decoration and form was imitative of these bronze vessels and objects, even to the point of molding rivets that are useless in clay. The scenes depicted as ornamentation were never felt to be as well executed or symbolically significant on pottery as they were on the bronzes themselves.



3)

The two bowls (Plates 4 and 5) are from the same region as the three preceding object-vessels. They are glazed earthenware from the Kāshān area dating from the 12th or 13th Centuries, A.D. Kāshān itself was well known as a ceramic center, just as Khurāsān was well known as a metalworking center. This implies that by this period individual regions had become known for specific styles and media or as 'schools' in relation to the arts.<sup>4</sup>

Janson (1973) points out that from the Tenth Century on the Seljuk Turks began moving across Islam and taking control of greater Persia and Mesopotamia, Syria, the Holy Land, up to the Byzantine Empire. Genghis Khan then followed with the Mongol invasion in the 13th Century. However, instability in the arts seemed to stabilize and grow even under Khan's rule, with the exception of metalwork, but declined later in the 13th Century under the rule of his grandson, Hulajo. Therefore, the 12th and 13th Centuries were a virtual artistic boom period after the squelching by religious doctrine enforced by the rule of Mohammed in the 5th/6th Centuries.

The artist had to overcome the ban on the representation of human and animal figures. Janson (1973, p. 190) writes that, "the royal courts felt that images of living things were harmless if they did not cast a shadow, if they were a small scale, or applied to objects of daily

use." The affect on decoration of animal and human motifs, "tended to become rendered to decorated motifs intrinsically no more important than geometric or plant ornament." From Mohammed onward, a great energy and passion for decoration in intricate detail and patterning using lots of color and the now well known Arabesque curves. During this time, there was much concern for mimicking or developing effects comparable to the Chinese wares in porcelain. Thus, many new techniques and discoveries in glaze and clay bodies were made.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the pottery still deliberately imitated metalwork both in form and in the imagery displayed on the surface. However, I did not find as much information concerning metalwork specifically as I have pottery. Perhaps there has been more historical research done on ceramic examples than on metal examples. In writing about the metalwork taking place in the specific period of the subject bowls, Graber<sup>6</sup> feels that it specifically fails to be coherent or heterogeneous in its understanding and depiction of traditional royal<sup>7</sup> themes of cult and religious motifs. Instead it depicts a life of pleasure, confusing diffuse elements from different sources, and taking too great an interest in ornamentation for ornamentation sake to the extent that the scenes did not make iconographically meaningful units.

Arts decoration developed in two main areas and to some extent were to be exclusively of this time period. They were the writing or script motifs and the iconographic images or scenes. In both instances, the principle pattern related to the royal family and the royal court; beyond that they tended to relate to a moral middle class. The written form was usually a strict Kufic style or a flowering Kufic style in Arabic and giving out aphorisms, proverbs, and good wishes. They

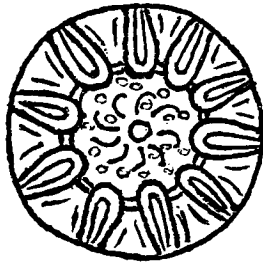
were often morally reinforcing the values (mores) of the people of the middle and upper class. They usually showed specific interactions between two people, families, etc., even to the extent that Grabar relates it to the "greeting or Christmas card." Some of the scripts make use of poems and excerpts from well known literary texts of the time. Simultaneously, a consistent motif extended to the very imaginative calligraphy of pure decorative design and pattern including plants and animals, to a lesser degree, as seen in Plate 4.

I find particularly important their development of broken spacial arrangements to fit around the Kufic scripts. A beautiful example of this is a Nīshāpūr bowl found in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. as catalog object number 57.24, also found in the Cambridge History of Iran, V. 4., plates 16 and 22. It shows a brilliant 'contemporary' sense of color and decorative motif, extremely well executed in its intricacies, yet delicate and graceful.

The iconography is categorized by Grabar<sup>8</sup> into three main styles of "cycles": traditional princely cycle depicting great personages, hunting, polo-gaming, music and dancing scenes; astronomical cycle; and a love or meditation cycle. The first two seems to be fairly easily decipherable, but the third is elusive, as the scenes "all are pervaded by a curious sense of immaterial reality", using some recognizable images but illusive in its meaning. The occurrence of these scenes or images seem only to exist during this time, 12th and 13th Centuries. Their poetry was esoteric being both "mystical and religious but ambiguously used an erotic vocabulary for its deeper purposes."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the two examples (Plates 4 and 5) are representative of a large, energetic effort to penetrate the royal dogma and taste to achieve

a strong new aesthetic level in objects used by most of the people in daily context. Their efforts were successful and lasting of the several succeeding centuries. These examples tell of the life and attitudes of the people of this time: bringing the use of the ordinary object up to a higher level of purpose and understanding.



4)

The last example that I chose is a bowl (Plate 6) from the Meso-American region, the Central Valley of Mexico, made around the 5th or 6th Century A.D. It typifies the times and well illustrates objects that were made and used. It is dated 550 to 650 A.D., and as being of the early Classic period. The various bits of information I have found seem to conflict concerning the dates of this whole period which just demonstrates the relative indefiniteness of the actual rise and fall of this civilization. This bowl seems to be placed in the late flourishing or decadent phases of the culture. The area and people, generally referred to by the name of its principle ruling center, Teotihuacān, are classified to include a span of existence from 600 to 1000 years, in four phases: Pre-Classic, Formative or Transitional, Flourishing, and Decadent (Covarrudias, 1957, p. 126).

The rise and fall of this great civilization came and went just as suddenly as those before and after. The Pre-Classic period ended abruptly in the height of its development, probably by being seized and conquered by the people who surrounded the valley of the Teotihuacān region. Their religious centers of Teotihuacān, Cholula, Xochicolo, Tajin and Monte Albān, were placed directly over the centers of the Pre-Classic civilization. And, once again, in its full bloom, the Teotihuacān civilization stopped suddenly around 600 A.D.

The objects found from the various phases of this culture demonstrate the degree to which the people were responding to the new ruling class of priests. The earlier objects are decorated with a seemingly freer and lighter attitude, becoming more and more strict in stylization, symbology, and refinement under the Theocratic rule until the objects take on a stagnant nature. This, in my opinion, paralleled the people's attitude toward the strong and demanding religious rulers until a breaking point occurred in the middle of the Decadent phase. Thereafter similar pottery and objects with decorations were made in the hills surrounding but not in the Valley itself. These pots were no longer well made technically nor well designed iconographically.

During the greater portion of the civilization however, complex religious symbols were incorporated in design with extremely high refinement. The bowl, (Plate 6) shows the common, most important means of decoration, the Fresco, that tells the legends and origin and religion of the people. Gods and high priests were most frequently represented. Of the many gods, these were the most important and therefore the most frequently depicted: Tlaloc the Rain God, (Quetzalcōatl) the Feathered Serpent or Celestial Dragon, Jaguar God of the Earth, the Water Goddess, the Sun God, Moon Goddess, the Old Fire God, the flayed god Xipe, and the Butterfly God. Most of these were represented by a single symbol in the painting or on the high priest.<sup>10</sup> The ( ) symbol at the mouth of the priest in the example above represents the Butterfly God, seen here as a nose ornament attached to the septum. - Only recently has iconographic speculation been presented and the concept of speculation even entertained.<sup>11</sup>



The artists who produced and decorated these objects, as well as the painting and sculpture of the time, were very adept at abstraction and the ordering of space. The object (Plate 6) is a good example. The frieze of continuous line is interrupted by the figure in a very integrated way, smooth and flowing. In many cases of trim around a scene, simple forms repeat but are most likely extremely refined abstract symbols with their own meaning, in common iconographic forms. Many of the shapes derive from headdresses, masks, and special characteristics of a god or deity. Elements of nature as well as astrological or solar symbols are used; numerals are also often used and come from the Mayan system of dots and dashes.

The example is made of fired clay covered with a slip and gesso and painted red over white. This was a new ware called "Thin Orange" which was used widely replacing the older black ware pottery. The major development in the arts of this time is considered to be in its monumental architecture and the treatment of the façade. The largest, most grandiose examples remaining are the two pyramids, Pyramid of the Sun and of the Moon. It is not well established as to how these were made at this time. Much technology seemed to be missing, such as the knowledge and use of metal which did not become known here until around 900 A.D.

The archeological discoveries and studies of those finds have raised many questions that remain too vague for answers. One was the discovery of a section of housing just off the main center of Teotihuacán. It is a fairly well accepted assumption that no one really lived in the religious centers, but if no one lived there, where did they live?

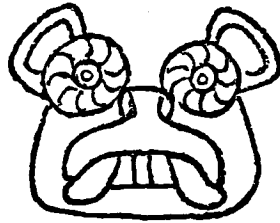
Estimates of the population of the surrounding area was 25,000 if agriculture was being practiced. But these dwellings, Tlaminilolpa, were

a crowded cluster of rooms and alleys, although the ultimate extent of this complex was never determined... no fewer than 176 rooms, 21 forecourts (atria) and five courtyards were uncovered... As yet we do not know to what degree [it] was typical of the city as a whole, but there must have been an immense multitude of traders, artisans, and other non-food producers living in quarters of this sort (Coe, 1962, p. 108/9).

The cluster may be an indication of the way the common people lived at this time.

Many of the surviving objects were produced specifically for religion-oriented use. The scenes are religious in nature either reinforcing beliefs, legends, etc., or in showing ceremonial and ritual practices of the high priests. Apparently, the making of the objects for these purposes were more and more given over to craftsmen that were attached to the 'courts' in a way, thus taking away that task from the common craftsmen producing plain pottery that were working before the rise of this religion's ruling class, with its new and elaborate art and social composition.<sup>12</sup> A trade form evolved, however, with an introduction of the clay mold enabling vast quantities of objects, mostly figurines, to be (mass) produced.<sup>13</sup> Covarrudias (1957) offers his speculation on the civilization's collapse as being

a combination of unfavorable social conditions -- the despotism of a reactionary ruling class and the growing pressure of the barbaric tribes... with natural factors that exploded a great political and economic crisis..., i.e., a failure of economic stability owing to the gradual destruction of the forest and the increase of a cyclical period of dryness (DeTerra, 1947) which must have shaken the faith of the common people in the magic effectiveness of their priests... (p. 121).

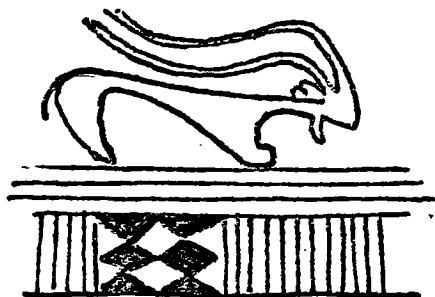


## CLOSING

In closing this brief anthology of several objects and the life, times, use and technical location of the people who made them, I would like to end with a quotation by Seton Lloyd with which he ended his book, Art of Ancient Near East (1961, p. 256). I feel this adequately sums up a feeling on the nature of the art of all times:

In this brief study of Near Eastern Art we have followed the evolution of man from his genesis to his first recorded achievements. Yet art, as distinct from his other creations, may be said like Aphrodite to have risen perfect from the waves of his creative thinking. No story need be sought of gradual development either in technique or inspiration; for it was born of individual intelligence and, itself like the sea, passed through storms of brilliance and calms of mediocrity. Our intention here has been merely to illuminate the crest of each wave in the phases of civilization which we have studied. In a work of this sort it would be wrong to seek a positive conclusion: for since man as a reflective being has spread the network of his thinking over the world known to him, art has been one of the main streams of his creative energy; not an accessory to his life, but as vital a part of it as the bloodstream itself. To express the full variety of his emotional experience, words have not sufficed; and as long as the springs of inspiration rise unimpeded in his mind, he will continue to interpret them in line, form, and colour.

Seton Lloyd



## FOOTNOTES

### Commentary

- 1) Vessel in the shape of a boar: the image may relate in concept and practice to that of the possible function of the cave painting from Lascaux, France, in terms of positive magic and survival of the species depicted/represented for the good of both the animal and the human. (it's fun to speculate!)
- 2) Glassblowers of Herak, Cabul, Afghanistan. 16 mm film by Dr. Robert Johnston, 1975.

### Anthology

- 3) Jean-Louis Hout wrote of some specific technical developments in Persia I, 1965. (Paraphrased notes, p. 82-84)
  - metal: a rarity; small copper objects numerous; shaped by hammering. At Siyalk III (c. 3000 B.C.) copper began to be cast in moulds -- evidence of professional craftsmen. "Luristan Bronzes".
  - castings of great duration and influence, end 2nd millenium to 540 B.C., pottery imitative of these bronzes.
  - clay: Siyalk II to III phases; dried and baked by sun, fingerprints on back; baking in real oven, then in kiln with temperature and draft control; turntable for turning vessel, to a proper potters wheel.
- 4) From O. Grabar's chapter, "The Visual Arts" from The Cambridge History of Iran, V5, 1968, p. 642:
 

"Be it in ceramics or in metal work, glass, and textiles as early as in the ninth century major objects were made and definable schools are identified, thus, at least on the level of the existence of a semi-industrial manufacturing tradition..."
- 5) From Ceramics, by Glenn C. Nelson, 1971; p. 24/5: clay: Developed methods to imitate mottled T'ang lead-glaze (in China on porcelain, in Iran on earthenware); developed soft paste porcelain around 1200. Unique use of luster glazes; brush decoration replaced the latter as well as Minai ware, influence was from Chinese textiles and paintings.
- 6) The Cambridge History of Iran, V4, Ch. 9. by O. Grabar, p. 358 (paraphrased).
- 7) Royal Themes refer to traditional Sasanian royal themes that existed in earlier dynasties. Grabar feels that they selected from the old to suit the needs of the new world, which lead to the

initial impoverishment of decorative themes. An exception was with gold and silverwork made with "conscious continuations of archaistic themes because princes consciously sought to relate to the earlier, especially Sasanian, dynasties" (p. 362).

- 8) Loc. Cit., Grabar, V.5-1968, p. 645/6.
- 9) Ibid., p. 647/8.  
 Note: Grabar mentions a hypothesis of R. Ettinghausen published in "The Iconography of a Kashan Luster Plate" in Ars Oriental's, vol. IV, 1961. The hypothesis suggests that a series of levels exist in the meaning of these Iranian objects, being both consciously ambiguous because the literature of Iran was ambiguous using a visual and poetic system, and "because these objects were...partly works of art and partly implements for daily living" (648).
- 10) M. Coe writes, (Mexico, 1962) of a tale of the Gods: "The most humble of them all, the 'Purulent One', cast himself into the flames and became the sun. But the heavenly bodies did not move, so all the Gods sacrificed themselves for mankind. Finally, government was established there; the Lords of Teotihuacan were 'wise men, knowers of occult things, possessors of the traditions'. When they die, pyramids were built above them. (Refers to the Pyramid of the Sun and Pyramid of the Moon.)
- 11) Interesting early papers centered on speculations in, Iconography of Middle American Sculpture, 1973.
- 12) The new role made a place for labored art to become realistic and iconographically refined, where before there was no basic need/support other than making utensils/vessels for living. There was no ruler-indulgence preceding this new civilization, having basically equal power and non-elite.
- 13) According to Coe (Mexico, p. 13) this technology was introduced with the invention or its importation from South America.

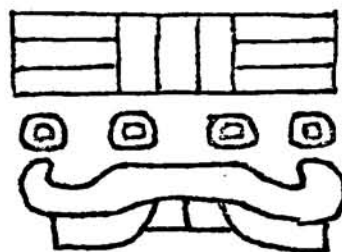
## LIST OF SYMBOLS

The symbols that are used as spacers throughout the first section have been taken from design elements used on clay, textile or other decorative arts by the artists of the general time and place being discussed. Their description and/or explanation follows. The symbols used in the second section are personal symbols, used to separate and/or break up the mass of words and thoughts.

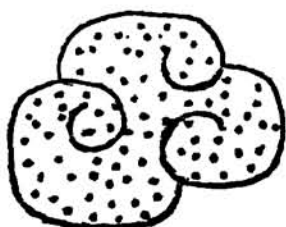
- 1-3. From, Indian Art of Mexico and Central America by Miguel Covarrudias; Figure 57, "Classic Teotihuacan Motifs". p. 138.
4. This motif is taken from a row of Ibex on the stem of a terra cotta vase. From the Siyalk III.7 site, c. 3100 B.C. in the Archaeology Museum of Tehran. From, Persia I, by Jean-Louis Hout, p. 218.
- 5-6. Motifs taken from a painted vase with spout from Necropolis B at Siyalk site, 10-9th Century B.C. in the Archaeology Museum, Tehran. From Persia I, Hout, p. 64 and 212.
7. From a bowl decorated with running greyhounds. Susa A, Necropolis of Susa, the Louvre, France. Photo 131, p. 217. "No less characteristic of Susa A are the wide bowls decorated on the inside. Here the artists always made skillful use of patterns that emphasized the rounded shape of the utensil. Here too, stylized animals appear side by side with purely geometric designs." (around 3000 B.C.) Persia I, Hout, p. 107.
8. From a bronze cup decorated with stylized fleur-de-lis round a central design composed of a garland of fruit (probably pomegranates) joined by festoons. Obtained by Sir Aurel Stein at Luristan. Archaemied Period, ca. 6th Century B.C. at the Archaeology Museum, Tehran. Persia I, Hout, photo 111, p. 216.



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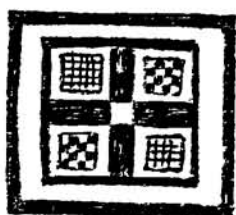
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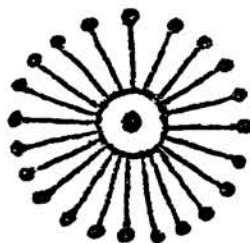
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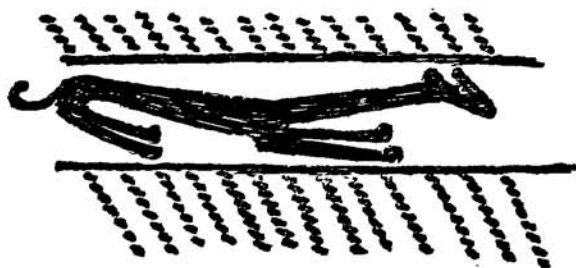
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6



7



8

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- 2) Coe, Michael D., Mexico: Ancient Peoples and Places (series), Fredrick A. Praeger, N.Y., 1962.
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- 4) Frye, R.N. (ed.), The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 4, Cambridge University Press, 1968. (ch. 9. "The Visual Arts" by O. Grabar).
- 5) Huot, Jean-Louis (Trans. H.S.B. Harrison), Persia I: From The Origins To The Achaemenids, Vol. 1, The World Publishing Co., 1965.
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- 11) Wilber, Donald N., Iran: Past and Present, Princeton University Press, 1955.

### Extra Readings:

#### Section One:

Ettinghausen, R., "The Iconography of a Kāshān Luster Plate", Ars Orientals, Vol. IV, 1961.

Iconography of Middle American Sculpture, (Symposium papers), the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1973.



## SECTION TWO

My thesis proposal continues, "I will concentrate on my personal development of sculptural holloware." This is followed by a quote by J. Krishnamurti that I felt symbolized the beginning of my journey, in spirit.

First of all there must be freedom to look, freedom to observe... it is only in freedom that you can discover something totally new. So if we are going to venture together, not only verbally but nonverbally, then there must be this freedom from any sense of personal demand, any sense of fear, hope or despair, we must have clear eyes, unspotted, unconditioned, so that we can observe out of freedom. That is the first thing.<sup>1</sup>

I am concerned with my position and place in life. I began to explore this position by beginning to look at the center of it: me, for the center can be no other place. We are all observers, and what we observe and interpret is directly associated or affected by our background, our life experiences. Objectivity is a difficult thing to achieve; it must be worked toward. This desire to see the world about me more clearly is connected with my thesis by constantly stimulating the process: questioning and contemplating, acting and reacting, to information and situations. I am learning. I will always continue to learn. I have will to grow and growing requires the commitment to change. I hold no fear in changes.

This year, I chose to stimulate a change from my existing pattern, to strip down cloaks and covers to reach toward foundation, structure and base, center point. I had a desire not to produce a specific contribution but mere content. I desired to add personal iconography into my work where little if any had existed before. I was dissatisfied with concerns of pure form, function and utility. My holloware came to feel empty and meaningless. All was preplanned and predestined to fail or

succeed. What I willed to develop was that persistent and gentle urging that told me to try the thing that comes up in process and progress, that leaves the path of the preplanned course and predestined appearance. I wanted to develop my creative intuition with my foundation of knowledge of my materials and educated judgement, allowing the deviation to occur naturally.

It is my desire to involve myself with the world, rather than to dwell in controlled atmospheres that can render life and life's work inert. In order to do that effectively, I felt I must first look into my own past, myth and learned pattern, and find their essential composition. Then I must understand and accept them wholly. This is the level where we all join together as one and the same. From this beginning, new things can be seen, understood, and worked with.

I look to create objects that deal with feelings and experiences in my life that are both highly personal as well as potentially relative to my culture. I do not purport to have gone very far with this, just to have begun. The manifestation of these desires may take many paths and forms as changes occur. I did not perceive this as an adventure of capsulated proportions, i.e., the period of thesis; rather, I look at it as a holistic process that will perpetuate and continue for a life time. I thank the circumstances which brought me here to see and to learn lessons far beyond the system that exists here. In my eyes, this Institute has become a mere and modest bridge.



# THE BRIDGE

12/80

Feel the excitement  
     the feet - solid  
     the arms - out extended  
     the middle - straining tight

The connection of two sides  
     closing a gap  
     opening a flow

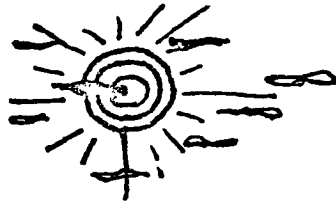
Use,  
     never asking - always giving  
 To use,  
     freely  
     unselfishly, provides  
 A necessary, random occupation.  
     Whenever wanted -  
     is there.  
     IS.

Always open and vulnerable  
 A sense of strength  
     of humble service  
 Simple and plain  
 Simple in perfection of function

A crossing point  
 A gift.

Welcome all passers-by  
     to celebrate the whole  
     - worth  
 Welcome mere existence  
     of being.  
     Now.

A humble gift to begin anew.  
 A humble gift to begin.  
     New.



I find that one begins where he left off, at least consciously, but is not conscious of what is to come. One can not know this explicitly and continue to grow. Our experiences are full of hints and messages of where we are going, growing. I may or may not listen. We may remember, later, but one can not account for the future. This is a wonderful characteristic of life and of living, the joy and pain and all the shades of the interpretations of our feelings that fill in between.

I came here fully interested in and intending to create functional holloware and to learn the craft and technologies that were located here. There I began. I have been aware that change can be slow and will not always show itself on the surface until it is ready. I have been aware of this and I have become very good at allowing things to surface and to listen to the quiet advice I find in the events and feelings I experience.

This can be seen dramatically in two works I produced in my first quarter here, shown on Plates 7 and 8, a sterling creamer and a pot titled "First Fall". The former speaks of where I was coming (or left off) and the successful fulfillment of that attitude; the latter speaks of

what was to come, surface. This was the point that sparked a real focus for my work. In these two works can be seen the whole story of my development from functional work to the area traditionally termed non-functional or sculpture.

The sterling creamer tells of my background influence of style and design. I was associated with the school of Northern European silversmithing through the currently available periodicals and publications that carried silverwork. Such magazines were Silber and Gold, Kunst Handwork, and Craft Horizons. I studied them going back as far as they did to see the growth, development, and trend. Every year craft books were coming out, too. They were Metal Techniques for Craftsmen by Oppi Untracht; the Bovin books for Schools, Tradesmen, Craftsmen; Contemporary Jewelry by Philip Morton; Modern Silver, by Grahm Hughes, as well as others. All were showing the work of the 1950's primarily, and not much had changed. Nevertheless I took the principles and was seduced by the purity of forms and joined that 'school'.

One basic thing I lacked in my development while in undergraduate school. Even with four instructors in a small department, I could not learn the solid craftsmanship of silversmithing. Much of the study was self-directed and focused on the works of such celebrated silversmiths as Fredrick and John Paul Miller, Henning Kopel, Gerald Benny and Georg Jensen. However, a main reason that I was aware of for coming to the School for American Craftsmen was to learn that solid craftsmanship under Hans Christensen. I wanted to learn that craft while developing my own work and eventually do my work entirely. My concept of that was like learning solid draftsmanship in order to go beyond it, abuse the craft of it if desired, or forget it entirely.

I accomplished this to my satisfaction in the sterling creamer. It was as pure a form as I believe I could design. The surface was as refined as I could possibly accomplish. In the end, it symbolized my ultimate article of functional holloware. It also symbolized the last of its kind for I had learned many things of myself over the course of the piece. A list of considerations show the gamut: preciousness in materials and their use; the economics of time in our present culture; my own personality realizations/discoveries; size limitations and a sense of banality in the small holloware object; the development of allergy to material; and the dichotomy that exists in the public and professional understanding of the medium.

The second work in this discussion, "First Fall", symbolized the beginning of my incorporation of these many thoughts and developments. Simply, it is made of non-precious materials, it is a modest abuse of traditional silversmithing techniques, it was larger than I had done before, it was not refined, and it served no obvious purpose (that would be up to the owner). It also contained my reaction to living in an area with four seasons where I had lived in areas with only two. The pot aptly captures my awareness with my first fall season: The leaves were magnificent, they were a foot deep, they were every color, they were playful, and they were above and in the surface of the ground. "First Fall" contains the first addition of really personal content in my work.

Traditional working methods were unsuited to my personality and physical well being. I had developed an allergic reaction to polishing compounds. This was actually a favorable development in terms of provoking change. Plannishing or a uniformity of surface is also a

necessary step, and one that I've found no interest in or patience for anymore. It just never suited my personality. The refinement sought after by common holloware was not very practical. The perfect surface is a difficult thing to chase, let alone achieve. However, it is something a craftsman must do. The surface, a highly refined one, is illusory because once attained, it is so easily destroyed. I question the care and reverence these objects require and receive. This adds to the mystique of preciousness and involves ritual participation.

Even though I am working on sculptural forms, I feel they are functional regardless of non-utility. I believe the messages of form and visual content function on several levels depending on the viewer. This I will expand upon later. However, at this point I have described two examples of my work. One is highly functional, the other only moderately so or visually so. However, the consideration of function takes a new twist when placed in society today. We have a highly developed and active technological society in which industry designs for function and use, but is more or less stripped of iconographic meaning. If vessels made by artist-craftsmen were not for ordinary use, which economics seems to indicate today, then it probably would not need to be so easily functional. Object-vessels may be made for exhibition display as much of the art jewelry is now. However, this jewelry seems to enjoy a much greater latitude and acceptance for its relative non-functional attitude which is not yet applied to metal holloware.

The conflict within me at the outset of this project was that I enjoy holloware a great deal but got stuck in its traditional (c. 1950's) roles and function and appearance. I found it ultimately suitable for me to develop the sculptural aspects rather than the functional.



Although I did not necessarily intend to go far beyond, or exclude the vessel entirely, I felt that I should develop this area -- sculpture and the addition of personal images and content -- in order to liberate myself from those 'traditional' roles and aspects of metalwork. This was also to be a development of attitude, toward craft and toward material and process. The injection of personal content must be integrated if the piece is to be successful. All aspects must work together. If I find many of the processes unsuitable for my personality in the depth that they require for success, then switch to 'personalizing' the image without addressing the process, the piece only becomes half of its potential. However, if I throw away the precept of acceptable working methods and materials and 'do' what feels appropriate for the successful attainment of the image, then it will have the potential of containing great power and strength in its message and its ability to project this to the viewer.

Several experimental pieces were made after the emergence of the "Fall" pot. The first was a response to an assignment to create a statement about a fellow classmate. The result was a piece titled, "For Donna" (Plate 9). This piece shows the exterior shell (brass) to be the person's outward appearance -- related to the style of her work. The inside unrolls as a weaving (of silk) with elements and colors that I felt represented her 'inside', with shell forms sliced up, reeds, etc., that spoke of her potential beyond the outer shell. A statement I wrote for this piece for the exhibition and catalogue of Containers '80 explains my feelings: "This piece, 'For Donna', contains my thoughts about a friend of mine: as she portrays herself outwardly, as I felt her to be inside, and my hopes for what she can be. There is my own imprint

included in a weave and an edge and an occasional patch as my life touches hers. This is my gift to Donna."

Another container that took a large step forward is "Hudson I". (There were 3 containers related to the same source imagery, "Hudson II" and "Intruded Upon".) In this pot (Plate 10), I tried to create as large as I could still using available stakes and hammers. I sliced up the volume, added elements and let the surface 'go'. The surface built up its own qualities over the period of creation dictated by the process it was subjected to: such processes were contaminated pickle remaining (copper plating as result of molecular migration) uncleaned; burning of areas during solder operations and left uncleaned, and so on. These rather small changes exemplify the process of 'letting go', allowing the strong, inventive genius of process itself to help the design and statement. The name Hudson refers to the Hudson River during the winter months, and captures my enjoyment of that river on a train trip from Rochester to New York City.

Another piece from this early period that directly relates to a large portion of my thesis work was a pot titled "April" (Plate 11) after a poem by T.S. Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead". The full title of the pot then would be, "April is the cruellest month...". It speaks of a personal tragedy which nearly kept me from completing the (spring) quarter, and possibly the program. The glass that pierces the body does so with the strength and purpose that I felt it did my own life. Another piece, of the same subject matter, is found on plate 14, a thesis work titled, "Bound Man, Bursting Man".

# JUST ABOUT SPRING

March 1981

The leaves that dance today  
     are last Fall's leaves,  
 Dropped in a hurry at the change of seasons  
     covered with snow and  
     frozen still.

Today they cover the hills and sparkle in the Sun  
     a richness next to dark, barren trees;  
 Reminiscent of the coming of a Cold age.  
 But today whispers rumors of a Spring that's  
     coming, warm and alive.

The life is there even in the white darkness,  
                     even in the cold starkness,  
                     of Winter.

Our lives so echo the seasons,  
 We put away sometimes,  
     after a colorful and savage high, afloat  
     and taken down, suddenly, plucked and tumbled.  
 We put ourselves away sometimes,  
     withdrawn and gray.

So long as faith in the Seasons hold.  
     qualities reaffirm and grow-  
     new tapestries attribute life and past-  
     in riches for tomorrow.  
 But a new dance will be danced just for today.  
     Just for Now.

Watch the leaves at play. Effervescent in light and air,  
     swaying and shifting and tossing over each other  
     as they drift along a path chosen by the Wind.

Today, rumors are whispered  
     of a Spring that's always to come,  
     warm and Alive.

William N. Mickle



A beginning point for my thesis direction was realizing that my critical thought process for designing functional work was deadended. I felt it would be best to completely set 'function' aside and only deal with developing a vocabulary of sculptural language. In this manner I felt two other areas of my development would benefit. One was the progression of formal and technical considerations of creative work beyond the present confines of the 'craft' concept. The other is the building of a foundation for personal style and content in my work. The concentration on the sculptural aspects would allow the use of a more varied group of materials and their use than I was already dealing with. Therefore, I began an exploration of new textures and ways of finding them, juxtapositions of shapes and elements, and the addition of color. I wanted to get away from the abundant use of hammers to their occasional use. I did not want the work to speak about metal or relate to the 'craft' constrictions of the common metalsmith.

Along with my ongoing look into the crafts field, stimulated by several books such as Tradition and Change by Julie Hall and Contemporary Jewelry - A Critical Assessment 1945-1975 by Ralph Turner, I was influenced greatly by a number of artists working primarily in

sculpture. Looking at them affected my direction and attitude quite strongly. I found rapport with the work of Isamu Noguchi, Louise Nevelson, and Alexander Calder. Beyond the work, their respective biographies and other documentation were also important. In each artist can be seen a fusion of life with work. In each can be found a magnificent integration where the spirit of the person can be felt quite strongly in the work itself. This wholeness is what I see as their strength and which gives these works and these people the quiet, powerful gift of wisdom. Coupled with looking at their lives, I also undertook to look into myself and family. The aforementioned trauma in the spring of 1980 brought me down from an ivory tower of sorts to the earth again and allowed a fundamental change in me to begin.

In my desire to add personal meaning to my work, I looked for this type of integration. These artists were my guides as were several others.<sup>2</sup> As I began to look for self expression, I tried to look beyond the obvious visual answers. A stepping stone that helped clarify this intention was a piece I did fall quarter, 2nd year ('80), titled, "Vessel of a Use Long Forgotten". Although I felt it was a successful piece (Plate 12), it was more important as something that I had to get out of my system. It was exactly what I wanted to create. I had chased it for a long time, and here it was, finally. Contemplating the finished work, I found it was not the right direction to pursue. It exemplified how strongly we tend to cling to things -- an image or desire -- and we feel we must create it even though we do not know what it is or why. I am grateful that this lesson came when it did.

The 'thing' I was chasing seemed to be to capture the idea or image of ritual and ceremony. What was missing was the knowing of

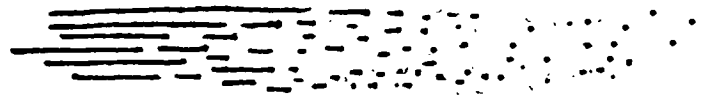
the rite. This has bothered me about much of the work done in this area today. There seems to be no real ritual, no authentic culture. It appears to be empty. A true ritual object lives. It is symbolic to a people at a point in time. It is not empty in use; even when set aside it is full of meaning as a symbol to the specific people who know.

I want to integrate my life in my work, but I also wanted to reflect my time and place and to give the viewer something to see and to think about. Everyone reacts differently, from different levels and centers within, to an object or situation. Yet, I feel there is a fundamental level of relationships within all people. Because we all come from the same evolution regardless of which creation story is preferred. This is shown by the increase in average height, or life-expectancy, or disease tolerances. We share a common origin. I feel a bond to the earth that is responded to on another level within us operating independently of our consciousness but perceptive and accurate nonetheless. We may choose to neglect and reject that of ourselves or we may develop an awareness and sensitivity to it, tune in and listen to it. So, this kinship is involved in my work as well.

The success of this abstraction in response is difficult to judge, particularly from the unconscious: Is it present or absent, real or learned? Scientifically, of course, this would not even be considered. However, there are many who believe in the areas of spirituality, hypersensitivity and parapsychology, and with that awareness it is possible to consider the validity. The acceptance and validity depend entirely on the individual and his or her own evolvment. I want to create an image that gives something back to the viewer, whether immediately or in some nonspecific period afterward to feel a

sense of relationship. I'd like to give them something they have lost and may rejoice in seeing once again by letting them know someone has shared their experience, joy or sorrow.

I do not profess to have been able to go very far into any of these areas/desires I have mentioned so far. I feel I have begun. There is much to learn and respond to. There are considerations of contemporary form, format, materials, the underlying image and modern day idiom, as well as the involvement of present day culture in general and of mine in specific. I can not know more than myself. Once basic levels of self are understood and accepted in oneself, then there can be a knowing of others too.



In most of my work certain themes or elements persist. However, the first two I will discuss are really one. Visually, they become separate. It is the idea of centeredness, which follows my belief of having a true center and a natural balance. We begin there, and through education, superstition, taboos and other things, we grow out of balance. Much of my work appears off balance, like it may fall over. Something may seem missing. It is a situation that is a frozen moment that at any time -- if unfrozen -- will fall. I relate the balance in life to centering a lump of clay on a potters wheel and throwing a

cylindrical pot.<sup>3</sup> Such is a way I have viewed my own life, 21 years of formal education and 24 years of life experience -- spinning. Several times I have felt the warble of being overworked and being thrown off center, close to a potential collapse. Although my work may appear off balance, there is usually an adequate, centered column or force to support and maintain position.

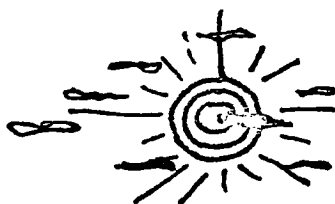
The next important theme is that of a layering of elements which gives a sense of build-up or of deterioration. I will not admit to being one or the other. To me, there are always both qualities present in our lives and environment because today's society is an amazing combination of modern development subsisting with an ongoing modern ruin. They used to be more separate of time and place. Now they exist concurrently. We improve our environment and quality of life, while at the same time, we are destroying the base of that environment, the earth and atmosphere.

Another common theme is the appearance of floating elements. There is not always an easily defined reason for their presence which seems out of place and which gives a sense of surrealism or dramatic stage setting. I see these elements (I call them leaves) as a representation of our naturally occurring environment. The general perspective of a scene is that we see everything, focusing on one area at a time. At any given time, objects out of context, a bird, airplane may come into view momentarily. Symbolically, these floating objects define the unexpected appearance of situations to our lives. They are there to pause upon, to think, and place in some reasonable context or meaning.

A great deal of significance, for me, is placed upon the placement of clusters or over-all ornamentation. The ornamentation may be found



either in the color qualities or richness of textures. These focal points draw the eye, interest and attention and seem to reflect my perspective of everyday environment. More specifically, ornamentation seems to represent my pure enjoyment of coming across the unexpected and potentially unnoticeable elements in the environment and allowing myself the time to experience them. I have often found this stimulating and rewarding in terms of enriching my vocabulary of form, color, juxtaposition of elements, and so forth. I also realize inherent humor, the projection of social relevance and personal relationships as metaphor. In other words, not only do I enjoy the design lessons I can learn from these situations, but I also entertain some of them as significant in terms of 'messages' that I may be meant to notice and question.



I originally conceived of my thesis body of work being done in two simple groups, determined by size. The "Sunday Series" were pieces done in a particular vein on a moderately small scale; the other was large scale sculpture. The "Sunday Series" work deal with highly personal context, and the larger works address a more general perspective. Along the way, the two categories crossed each other's boundaries and integrated. I will, however, discuss them here as if they had maintained the original, easily determined categories.

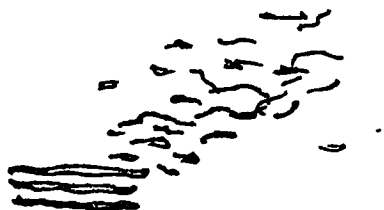
The "Sunday Series" was a concept perceived to actively stimulate two areas: to learn a sculptural attitude and to experiment with a new form-language vocabulary; and to experiment with the overall development of personal iconography. Some of the results of the latter can be found in the previous discussion on themes that grew in my work. The over-all evolution of content began with an almost obvious abstraction of statement of personal feelings and eventually went deeper and deeper into expressing emotions, therefore becoming more abstract. Because of this, the early work can be easily discussed verbally in terms of symbolic representations, and the latter work needs fewer words.

The feelings I began to deal with were concerned with a specific period in my recent past, my first year here. I wanted to portray a range of emotions felt from severe loneliness to extreme depression and confusion. The former had to do with the depiction of low-energy feelings that I would feel most significantly on Sundays, sweeping through me and then dissolving away by the next day. With this set, I also believe there was a true rapport with many, many people as a commonly shared or basic emotional occurrence. Although similar, the latter dealt specifically with the trauma I underwent last spring as a result of an abrupt ending of a long term love-relationship. Both of these types must be common to all people at some points in life.

A successful piece then, beyond my own feelings and reactions to the work, could be judged from the response of people who could actually understand and feel themselves through the work. My desire to go into and re-experience one of these emotions and to create with that charge, lead me to limit each individual piece to a week or two duration of creation during which I would not occupy myself with any

other similarly creative work. I felt this may allow, as much as possible, the freshest and strongest statement to be felt through the material and concentration on construction. The rapidity would also restrict my indecisiveness with form and material to be used and increase experimentation and risk, and lessen refinement.

The first two works that were fully conceived of as belong to this group were "A Mirror Reflection" and "Bound Man, Bursting Man" (Plates 13 and 14). These were quite obviously self portraits, in terms of the latter, quite literal as well. "A Mirror Reflection" has no mirror surface. Its intent was to show myself using the concept and format of a hand mirror. The article may even be lifted from its stand. The handle is almost entirely unrelated to the mirror section as I felt the handle could not possibly -- ever -- relate to the person who picked up a mirror and dared to look at him or herself. Thus, the contrast is strong and provoking. The mirror section reveals many little surprising and beautiful qualities along with larger, dominating expanses of metal, darkened and stark. The article leans heavily on a base support without which it would never be displayed. "Bound Man, Bursting Man" exhibits confusion, frustration, and hurt in motion. On the skin of the bust can be seen the imprint of the steel screen. On the base is found a part of the head-form revealing a mind-full of thoughts: a poem in progress. All show the severity of the experience. A poem accompanies the sculptural bust in a finished, resolved state: statement.



The larger sculptural works, the second category, were to relate in a general way to the viewer by giving them something they had lost. The conceptual expectations far exceeded any physical reality. I created only two large works: "Untitled: Standing Figure" (Plate 15) is 4 feet tall with a steel base and brass and copper top, and "Windform" (Plate 16) which is 3 feet tall using nickel, brass and copper. Ultimately, these two works were of greater importance to my development in terms of learning a new style and form-language and construction than in satisfying the desired goal.<sup>4</sup> The basic desire was to look at nature and natural phenomenon, synthesize it, and recreate sympathetic forms that address the unconscious (human) ties to environment and evolution that I feel exist within us. I wanted to relate forms, textures, and juxtapositions that the viewer may have enjoyed earlier in life experience and either forgot or put away, or saw with the unconscious and would relate to.

Beyond these four works, a uniting of forms and crossing of purposes and meanings occurred. My category distinctions became obsolete. "Silent Forest" (Plate 17) fairly literally depicts a forest scene, replete with fallen tree, translated into metal. This scene tells

a story of my background: my family heritage and family culture. Having never really felt a part of history, through nationality or religion, I had never considered this factor to come into my work. Then I realized that I did have a family history that was strong and of long lineage to be proud of. My family, on one side, has worked within the wood industry for at least six generations. And, even though that family occupation has changed over the years to a managing capacity, it is real and alive. So, I depict this heritage, but not without my own commentary, a visual word of caution concerning the delicacy of the earth and our resources. The word interjects in the form of floating elements and the strange quality of the base (earth) and the contrast of new young trees, colorful and straight, and the old trees of steel, cut off and facing all in one direction.

The next two go in depth, inside me, more abstractly than the first two Sunday Series sculptures. "Broken Territory" (Plate 18) is again based on relationship and its evaluation. It is uneasy and freezes the process of deterioration felt in the piece. The main body hangs out with no remaining support. Even the stone on the base 'continues' but has been physically taken away. The stone is the center with all its own magical qualities. The layers are broken through and realness is visible. "Uneasy Journey" (Plate 19) is a stage setting of six tall vertical sticks, each one having a similar but unique wrapping and character to its stance. They stand awkwardly like a family, related but separate. I identify with the tall thin unwrapped vertical, perhaps as the one that stands most alone, separate and quiet. The floating elements are minimal representations of myself, in an uneasy emotional territory.

"Warm Shift" (Plate 20) is the last sculpture completed in time for the thesis presentation. Unlike the others, the energy I felt in this piece is relaxed and steady. It accurately measures my emotional state of confidence in sifting through the many layers of concern I wanted to deal with during this thesis period. The desires I set out to achieve may not have been met. There must be a starting point and a catalyst for progress and change. This whole process, thesis, has indeed actively stimulated change and provided an outlet, with enough freedom, for personal expression.



POEM for "Bound Man, Bursting Man"

Wise Wind,  
     blowing,  
         breezing,  
             bathing us  
 on air that spends the senses  
 in unimaginable ways, infinite  
 in their essences,  
 all of them messages imparting knowledge  
     if listened to,  
     if followed on its journey,  
     if breathed in - full bodied  
         Life.

I ask you then for answers.  
 I wait with unsure patience,  
     faith-bound for the miracle  
     born of our exchange.  
 For I am burned and pillaged.  
     torn and thrown,  
     broken and shattered  
     of my place.

I lived hard.  
 I lived overlooking the sea and shore.  
 I lived delirious of the nature at play, evolving.  
 I lived on a cliff that eroded away,  
                                     in absence,  
                                     am I a blind man too?  
 What dreams of mine had projected life!  
     Without the blood, the tears, the joys.  
 Dear God, I went too far,  
     And lost for real.

I walk in an endless time,  
     at the dawn,  
     at the dusk, and in those moonlit hours,  
     under trees that cast an awesome darkness,  
     under streetlamps that arrest and isolate  
                                     naked truths.

Walking, waiting for the Wind  
 To rise,  
 To bathe me of my sorrow  
     wash away my heart-pain  
     heal my scars and fill me  
     with the warm and gentle substance,  
 Of life.

I am bound to a past that no longer exists,  
I am bursting with an energy that has lost its direction,  
wasting,  
burning out.

Teach me the nature of your breezes.  
Bring me to my self again,  
          centered firmly;  
          nudge me, and push me forward.  
Tell me that I can walk with light steps,  
                                  to play,  
                                  to dance, and  
                                  sing.  
(Which is the closest reflection to my heart-song)

Open my eyes and lift my head.  
Reopen my arms....

William N. Mickle  
April, 1981



## Section Two

### Footnotes

1. J. Krishnamurti, You Are The World, Harper and Row Publishers, 1972, p. 71.
2. I found support for change from many sources; from the works of Gary Snyder (poet) J. Krishnamurti, M.C. Richard's books, the PSI Institute (Process) in California, etc.
3. See also a book based on the analogy of life to clay working: Centering: by Mary C. Richards.
4. Another difficulty with these two works was in their construction. The size was a big factor in squelching further production. I made both, completely, at my jewelers bench with a small torch. It was also difficult to contend with the studio's space and full use, capacity.



PLATE 1. Ceramic vessel in the shape of a boar c.3000 B.C., Proto-Elamite, S.W. Iran. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

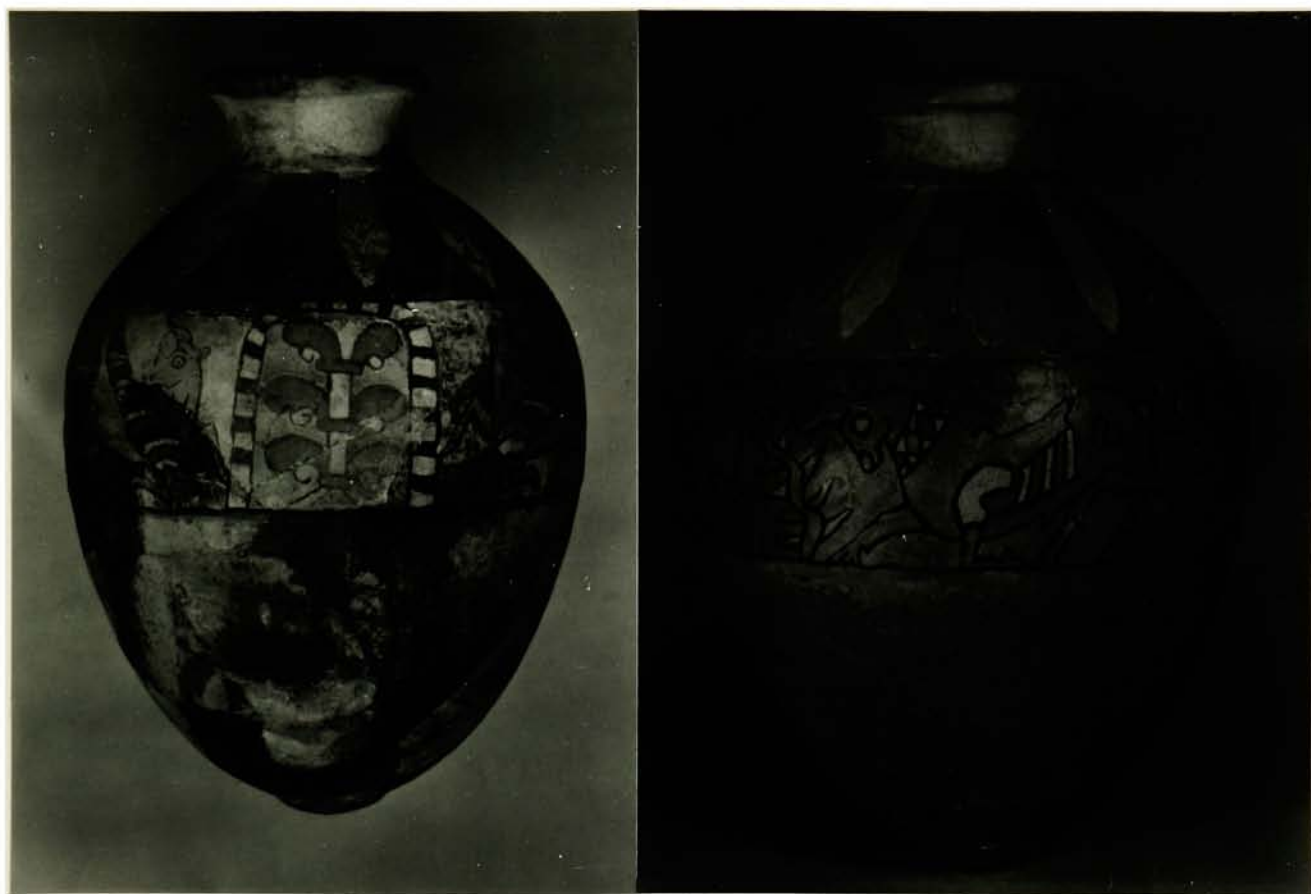


PLATE 2. Ceramic vessel, glazed jar c. 7th Century B.C.,  
Zawiydh, Iraq. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

PLATE 3. Ceramic vessel, glazed jar c. 7th Century B.C.,  
Zawiydh, Iraq. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



PLATE 4. Earthenware with underglazed painting.  
12th-13th Century, Kashan, Iran. (The  
Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts)



PLATE 5. Earthenware, glazed and painted, (Abad)  
13th Century, Kashan or Sultan, Iran.  
(The Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative  
Arts)



PLATE 6. Tripod cylindrical bowl with ritual scene, stuccoed. Early Classic period A.D. 550-650, Mexico. (The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art)

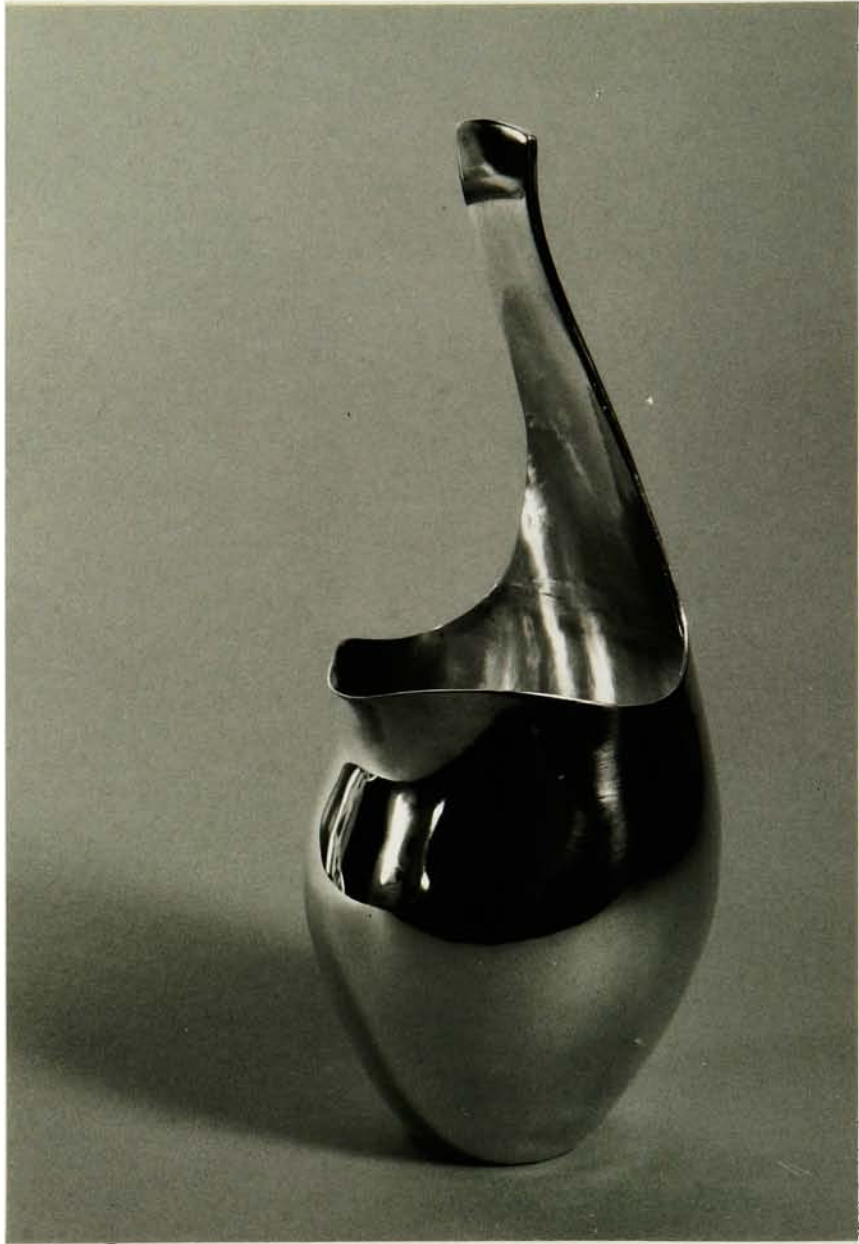


PLATE 7. Creamer, 1979.





PLATE 8. "First Fall", 1979.





PLATE 9. "For Donna", 1980.



PLATE 10. "Hudson I", 1980.



PLATE 11. "April", 1980.



PLATE 12. "Vessel of a Use Long Forgotten", 1980.



PLATE 13. "A Mirror Reflection", 1980-1.  
(Sunday Series #1)



PLATE 14. "Bound Man, Bursting Man"  
(Sunday Series #2), 1981.



PLATE 15. "Untitled-Standing Figure"  
1980-1.





PLATE 16. "Wind Form", 1980-1.





PLATE 17. "Silent Forest: The young will  
whisper the old songs", 1981.

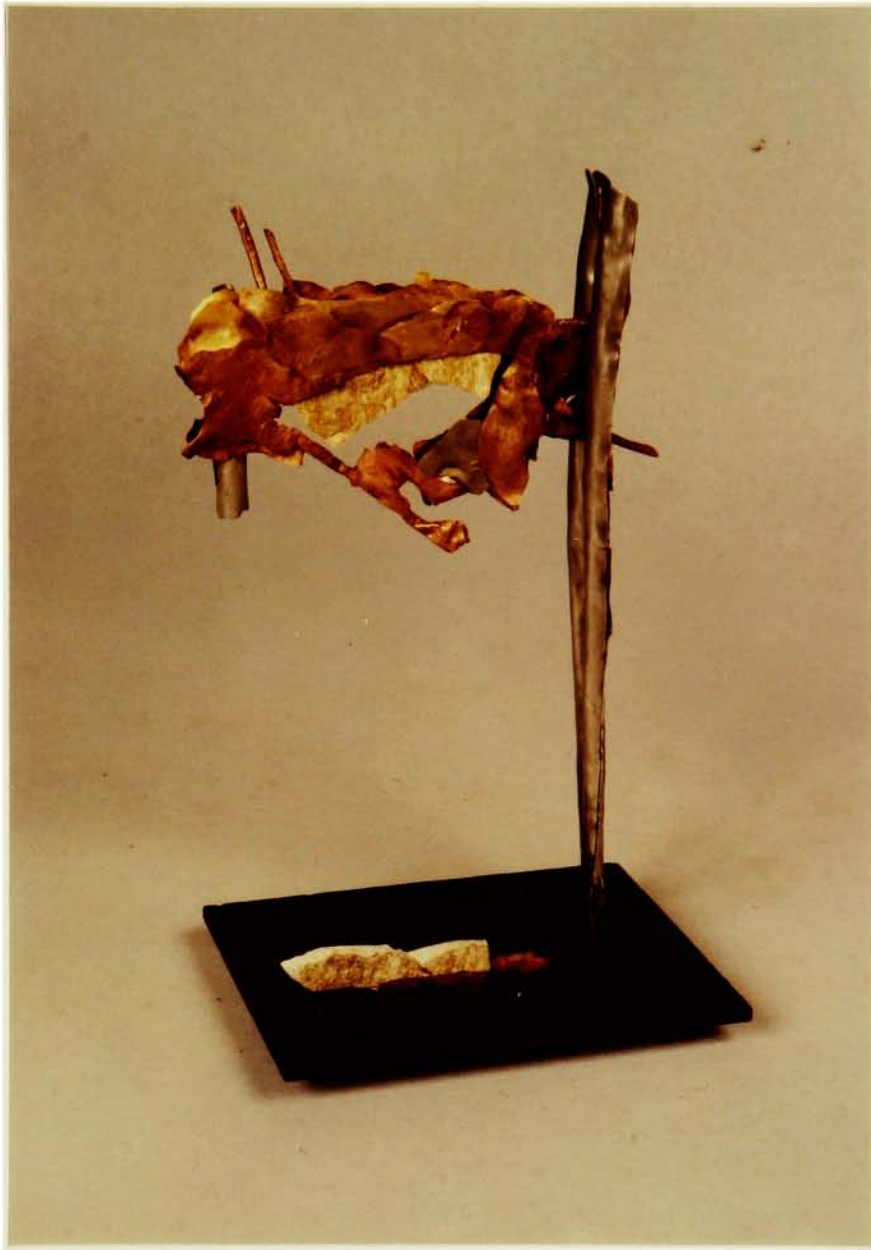


PLATE 18. "Broken Territory: Heartland Stone", 1981.

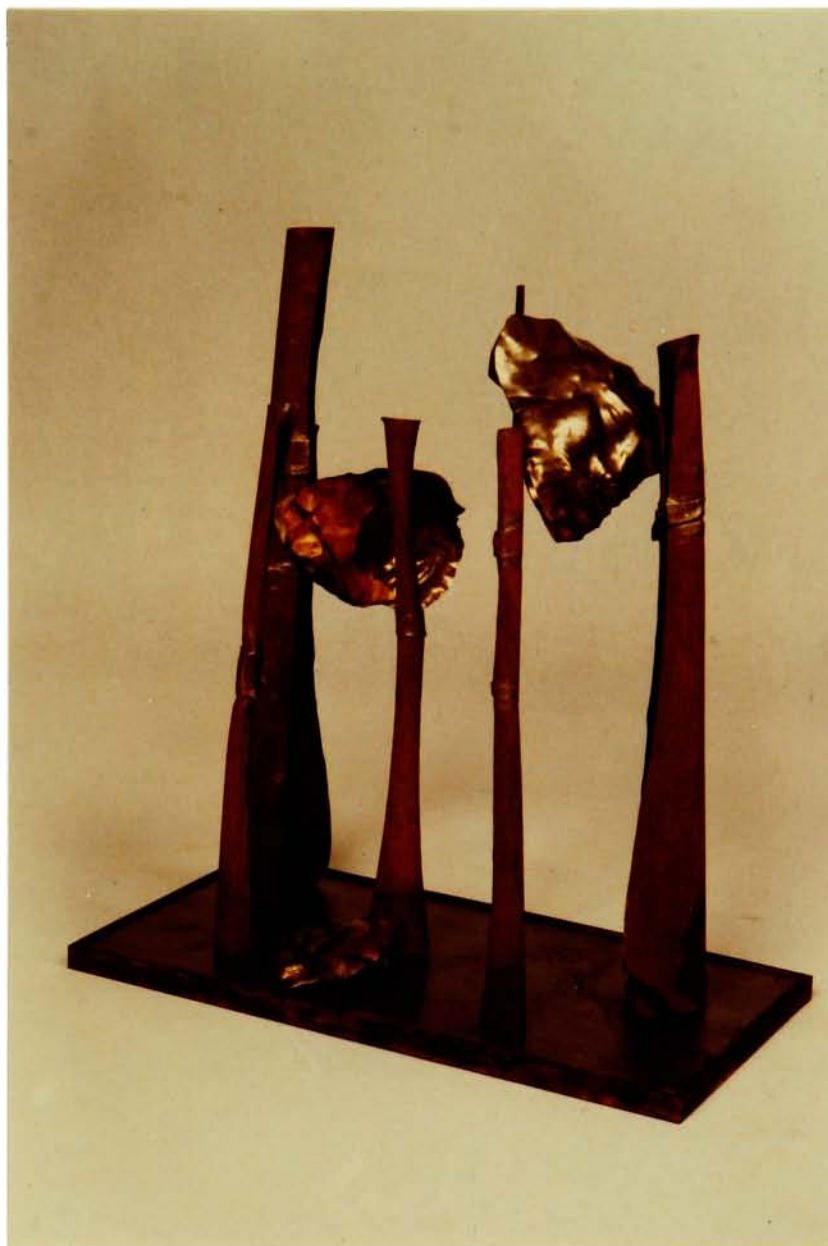


PLATE 19. "Uneasy Journey", 1981.

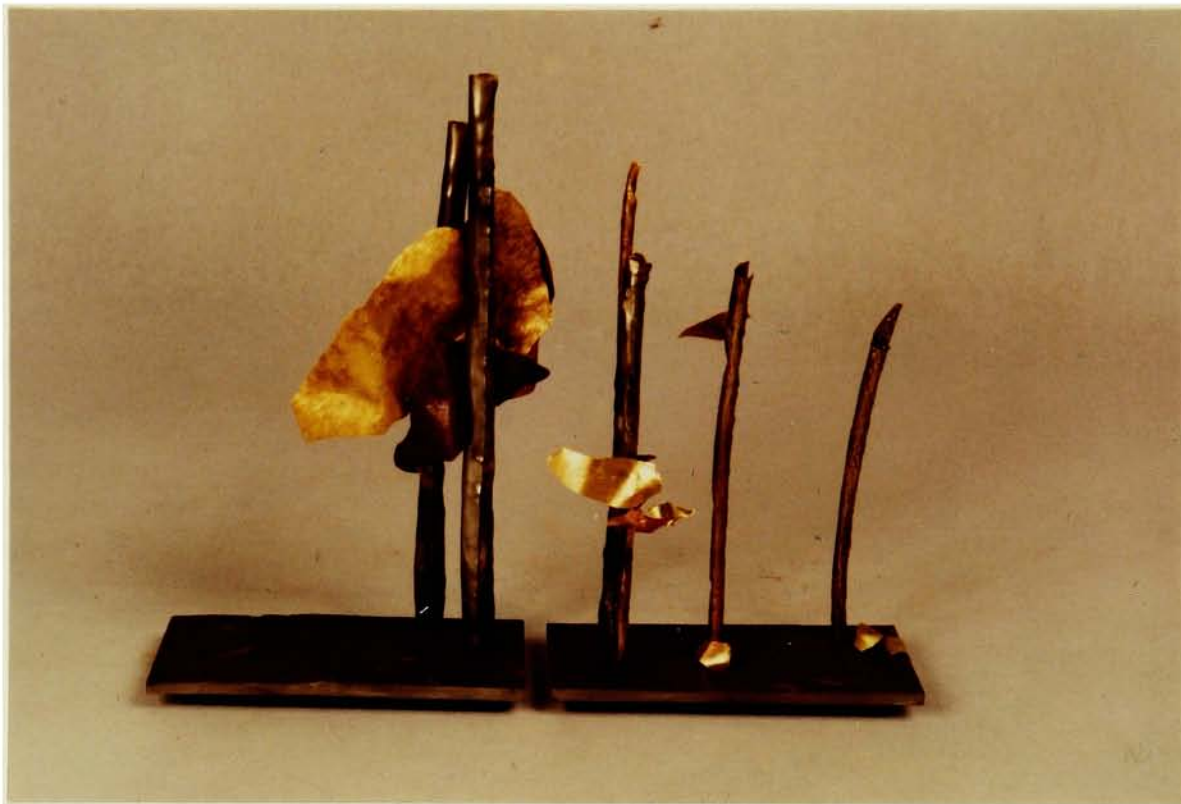


PLATE 20. "Warm Shift", 1981.